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THE

MILL AGENT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"OPPOSITE THE JAIL."

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1864.

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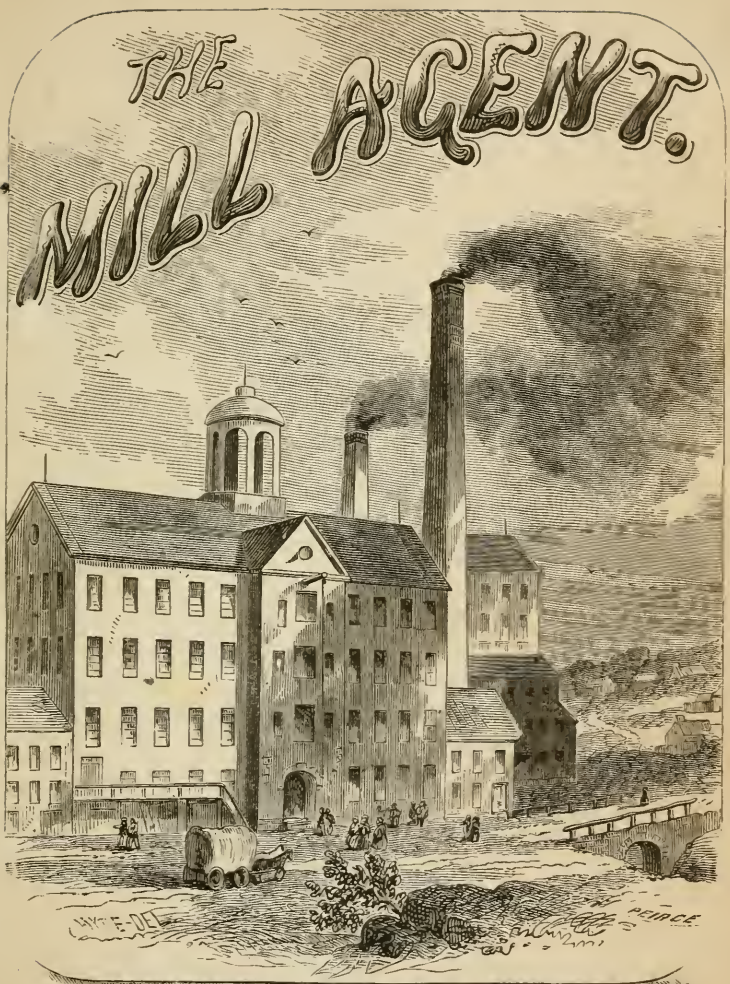
THE MILL AGENT.



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GRAVES AND YOUNG.
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THE MILL AGENT.

CHAPTER I.

THE TAVERN AND ITS KEEPER.

TRISTAM SAINT dozed in his arm chair. Before the picturesque old tavern the elms stood statue-like, letting the light down in mosaic fragments through their pensile branches. The aspens made a quivering show of silver-lined leaves. Hill and valley, meadow and orchard, softened and brightened by the mid-day sun, seemed indulging in completest rest.

Clifton Locks was then—is now in some degree—a quiet by-town, seven miles from the rail road, and through which, once a day, the old-fashioned stage coach rattled clumsily,

conveying passengers into the interior. Its most conspicuous buildings were the Leffingwell mills—three stately edifices, bristling with numerous windows, and the quaint old Coates House—a revolutionary reminder, now known as Saint's Inn, not from any peculiar sanctity that attached to the place, but merely because it was kept by a man named Tristam Saint. For twenty years he had been tavern-keeper in Clifton Locks. He was an easy going man, rather methodical in his habits, very set in his opinions and quite averse to going out of a regular routine in anything. Tristam Saint was far from being what his name denoted. What his opinions were upon all questions of that kind, nobody knew; for there were none in Clifton Locks who ever talked of the matter. There were no church edifices, or societies, within four miles, and the very few who attended the old village meeting house at Hydewell, went thither in the family wagon, returning in time to spend the remainder of the Sabbath more to

their liking, in visiting, in sports, or in gathering round the bar in the old Saint's tavern, whose proprietor did a flourishing business on that particular day. Tristam Saint was a large man, and one whose face, had it been kept in repair by the constant polish of refinement, or the beautifying touch of religious culture, would have been strikingly handsome. As it was, there hung a stolidity of expression over the whole countenance, that only cleared away under the influence of strong excitement, sufficiently to show what the man might have been. He generally sat in his bar-room, ready to exchange words with each new comer—and when alone, with chair tilted back—he was oblivious to all sense of sight or hearing, for he slept easily.

On the day in which our story commences, he had stepped from his dining-room, in the same wing of the building with the bar, and placing his cushioned arm-chair in its easiest position, had taken his seat in dignified con-

tentment, soon dozing, as was his wont. The little room had not been much visited that day, for the farmers and mill hands were busier than usual, consequently the sanded floor had not yet lost its smoothness and whiteness. The counter, its red top well varnished and well kept, glistened in the redder sun. The tumblers stationed on a Japan tray, stood glistening, and inverted round the portly frame of a cut-glass decanter; and the blue and black casks showed evil heads, under which lurked the gilded ruin of the old tavern. For the rest, all was well enough. Tristam Saint had a neat body for a wife, who kept the curtains snow-white, and the window-glass from speck or flaw of dirt. No dust lodged whenever she moved—even the odious spirit-casks owed their immaculate lustre to her love of cleanliness. The walls were semi-annually white-washed, and the heavy rafters overhead, though long guiltless of paint, were equally so of cobwebs or dust.

A light step sounded on the door-sill. The inn-keeper looked lazily up. It is not likely that he had ever read Roger's Italy—or thought with him—

> "Her face
> So lovely, yet so arch, so full of mirth,
> The overflowing of an innocent heart!"

but his eye grew softer as it met that of the beautiful, fairy-like creature standing there, smiling.

"Ah Toddles!" he exclaimed, his dull eye brightening, "off to the mill?"

"Yes, father; good afternoon," she replied, merrily.

"Good afternoon, Toddles," he answered.

"Now, father, you promised you wouldn't call me Toddles; I don't like it," she cried, an incipient shadow on her brow.

"Well, well, Hager, then—be off, child, and let me get my nap," responded the tavern-keeper good naturedly; and the girl, with a laugh and a hop, disappeared, taking her direction towards the mills.

It was getting near three before there were signs of active life in the vicinity of Saint's tavern. The weather had grown cooler, and wagoners now and then came in to slake their thirst. Presently a gray mare cantered up to the door; a tall, portly, bluff personage flung himself from the saddle, and entered the inn. He was a man past fifty, and iron-gray hair showed under the broad brim of his shapeless Kossuth hat; his whiskers were trim and gray, his eyes, cool and resolute in their glance, clear, and of a sparkling blue. Deep lines from the margin of the bold features to the square, determined chin, seemed to betoken force of character, as well as much thought. His dress was a buff waistcoat, high, glossy, black stock, and a blue dress-coat, garnished with bright buttons. His boots were carefully polished, and straps confined his nether garments tightly beneath them. He wore riding gloves of untanned leather, and held a whip, whose handle was highly ornamented, in his hand. Add to this an elaborately ruffled shirt-

bosom, and you have a gentleman of the old school in the person of Colonel Leffingwell; the only modern part of his attire being the black Kossuth before mentioned, which he always wore when travelling.

Tristam Saint met this man with a deferential bow.

"Ah, Saint, how d'y do? how's business?" queried the colonel, walking directly, as was his custom, to the bar.

"Tolerable brisk, thankee, Colonel," replied the landlord, waiting on his customer.

"Well, Saint," the colonel had thrown himself into the only easy chair and flung his hat on the counter, as he sat eyeing his horse which was restless; "Clifton Locks has gone on about as usual, I suppose; no fires; no robberies? It makes a man uneasy who owns valuable property to stay away from its vicinity longer than a night. One has all sorts of visions of burning houses, especially mills; or trouble of some sort. By the way, do you hear anything about the overseer? is he generally liked, do you think?"

"I should judge he was," replied the tavern-keeper.

"A good, capable man, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Drink much, think? You know it won't do to encourage any immoderation in that direction."

"Scarcely touches the thing, sir."

"Ah! glad to hear it," replied the colonel, with a half sigh of relief. "Now we've got a pretty likely fellow in that position, and the prospect of another coming, we shall get along admirably. I wonder what the operatives think of Grande?" he added, thoughtfully.

"Toddles, that is, Hager, my little girl, likes him very much; says he is kind and polite to them all."

"Ah! I'm glad to hear it. I felt fearful; it's a difficult post for a young fellow like Austin Grande; but then you see, he has an excellent mother, and when a boy has a good mother, somehow it seems a guaranty for his future. By the way, I shouldn't wonder if

Coit came along to-night, the new agent; what can you do for him?"

"Really, colonel," the tavern-keeper paused, thoughtfully, "I don't know where I can keep him; there isn't a single room in the house."

"That's bad," interrupted Colonel Leffingwell, hurriedly. "None of the boarding-houses round here would exactly do for him, and the private families have accommodated as many as they can. "I'm sorry, sorry—can't you manage some way?"

"Don't see how I can, colonel," returned the tavern-keeper. "At any rate," he added a moment after, "if I can't make room, I'll get him a place till I can."

"Do so;" the colonel had risen and was now pulling the whip cord through his fingers; "you will oblige me very much. By all accounts young Coit is a superior man, a man of sterling principle, they say, and I shall not probably lose so much money through his fingers as I did through Hunt's, the reprobate!

You've heard nothing from Rose Hedge, I suppose?"

"Nothing, sir," replied Tristam. "I saw Miss Mary riding, yesterday. She seemed bright as a button, sir. Master Merric came down with her to hire the long room—so I suppose they'll have great doings Thursday night."

"O, I'd forgotten—yes, indeed—trust Lincoln Lockers for such things—yes, they'll have a gay party of course; they always do."

The colonel by this time was mounting his horse. It needed neither whip nor voice to spur the spirited animal on, for her face was turned homeward. After his departure, customers came thronging in to the tavern bar-room. Chairs and stools were appropriated. Smokers lit their pipes, and seated themselves on the wooden settees on the outside of the bar-room; the laugh and the joke, and alas! the oath went up unrestrained, for God was not honored in Clifton Locks: scarcely known. These smokers were soon surrounded by vil-

lage boys, who begged a whiff, or with corresponding noises played games of marbles and tag. With the cooler breezes of waning day, matrons came out of their cottages, sewing or knitting in hand, and sat on steps underneath the shade of tall trees. Crickets began when the birds left off, and droned cheerfully. The whip cracked, and the hoarse "gee git up" of returning wagoners sounded on the air. Pleasant bustle and the mixed confusion of myriad voices reigned supreme until the bell of the nearest mill joined in with its silvery clang. Then by scores came the operatives from the doorway of the mill—young, old and middle-aged; little toddling girls, bright eyed rosy-cheeked, carrying their shining kettles. Young maids, modest and shy, or saucy, defiant and bold, flocked by, exchanging words, nods and smiles with those whom they passed. Soon again the sound of feet was hushed; it was the end of a working day; let the morrow take care of itself. Only one more incident and this chapter is finished. There was a

clatter of horse's hoofs—a colt, white as snow, turned the corner, on which sat Mary Leffingwell, her veil floating like a cloud around her head. Following her on a coal black pony came a boy of some eighteen years, his face almost girlish in its outlines, and his hair quite long and curling, clustering thickly on his white collar and against his blooming cheeks. These were the pride of the town, the two beautiful, only children of Colonel Leffingwell. It was said that the boy was the idol of his invalid mother; while Mary, the somewhat haughty, but in reality a sensible girl, was the pet of the old colonel. Rapidly they came on, alike, yet unlike; her long sea-green riding habit contrasting delicately with his light linen suit; her dark eyes and fair, colorless cheek, with his blue orbs and brown locks, that were like his mother's.

They paused a moment at the quaint low door-way of Saint's inn, or rather the boy did, she moving onward very slowly. Tristam had thrown down the sash that formed its

upper part, and was leaning upon it in a lazy way, with folded arms. The fair face of Hager peeped from the half closed blinds above; the halo from the setting sun threw golden glory over the two young equestrians.

The boy bowed—the landlord bowed carelessly, never lifting himself.

"Mr. Tristam, I'll see you about that affair to-morrow," he said.

"Very well, sir," replied the landlord, then added: "perhaps you didn't know the colonel is come—just gone an hour ago up to Rose Hedge."

A glad smile leaped from lips to brow at this. "You don't say; has he?" half shouted the boy; and hurrying after his sister, he told her the news.

"There they go, hurry scurry," muttered Tristam; "she's nigh twenty, they say, but they neither of them look more than children. Well, the colonel's got a handsome family, that's the fact; what a pity that his wife is sick all the time!"

Hager had gone down stairs, meanwhile, and was now busy with the girls and her mother setting the table, while the savory odor of cooked viands made the air seem pleasanter to those who lounged without.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW ARRIVAL.

THE tavern-keeper changed his place to the arm-chair within; by twos and threes the outsiders had gone, until there were left only those who were boarders at the house. One of these was a young man who sat somewhat apart from the rest. His arms were folded over his chest, and he was gazing abstractedly westward, his eyes perhaps riveted on the dying glories of the wondrous sun-tinted clouds. His face was that of a resolute man. Keen, dark eyes, deep set, looked out from under restless but thick brows. The outlines of his face appeared to have been sharpened and set before their time, and his thin lips were ever and anon pressed together, token of absorbing thought. This was Austin Grande, one of the officers of the mill-works;

a man but yet twenty-one, looking older by three years and wiser by ten. The others were, one a clerk, in the employ of the mill, and several under officers; two young men spending a college vacation at Clifton Locks, and one or two married men who had chosen the beautiful town for a summer sojourn with their families.

"Stage is behind time," remarked one of the boarders, consulting his watch.

"Not much," said Austin Grande, starting from his reverie; "I wonder if the new agent will come to-night? Hark! there's the horn."

Presently the broad breasts of the leaders appeared, then the yellow-black front of the coach, and with a flourish, the driver, an old leathery-faced Vermonter, drove the vehicle in splendid style, sweeping round so that it went some ways ahead of the door, now filled by the portly personage of the inn-keeper, and by a dexterous move backing the horses till the stage steps were opposite the old horse-block. The handsome bays stood patiently,

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EAST BOSTON.

regarding with wistful, sidelong glances, the old wooden trough nearly full of cool, fresh water, while everybody was gathered in windows and hall to see who had come.

One person, only, descended from the stage, a tall, gentlemanly looking man, dressed in drab clothes, who glanced about him with a rapid eye and pleased smile, then moved into the house before any one could take a good look at him. His baggage, a small black trunk, and two or three boxes, followed, and the landlord, softly rubbing his broad palms together, confronted the stranger with a courteous bow.

"Mr. Coit, I presume," he said.

"That is my name, sir," responded the other, taking off his hat, and for a moment seating himself with a look of weariness, though the smile still brightened his lips.

What volumes the displacing of a man's head-covering adds to his face! Surmounted by the hat, the countenance of this stranger was pleasant, but not remarkable. Now, with

the soft, thick hair pushed back from a forehead full of noble expression, the whole face took a higher tone and commanded instantaneous respect, if not veneration. Young Grande, who had sauntered into the room, seemed struck with this new countenance. He glanced toward it eagerly, and the almost painful strain that appeared always to regulate his features, passed away, leaving only admiration in its place.

"Can I have a room, landlord?" asked the new comer; and his very voice was musical as if some undercurrent of melody were keeping perpetual rythm in his soul.

"I'm very sorry, sir," said the landlord, beginning to apologize, "but the fact is, the house is full, and I shall have to find you other accommodations for to-night."

"Mr. Saint, he is welcome to my room, for the present, at any rate," said young Grande, speaking quickly and eagerly. "After such a long journey he must need rest."

Guilford Coit looked up, and that sweet

smile broke over his face again, as he met the young man's eyes, and the landlord made them acquainted.

"I am indeed very much fatigued," he said, "and need, as you see, some ablution after the dust of travel, but I should be sorry to discommode you."

"You are perfectly welcome," replied Austin Grande, who seemed somehow to have grown younger all at once. "Let me take you there, sir," he added, leading the way. In another moment Austin Grande was down stairs again, leaning against the window, deep in thought. Suddenly he spoke unconsciously aloud,

"The first man I ever liked, at first sight. O! the difference between him and that cur, Hunt! I wish he'd room with me; if he will, he shall."

It was not long before the bell rang for supper. The dining room, like everything else in this public house, was a model of neatness. Hager Saint, an untaught poet, always placed

garden-flowers on the table, and nowhere could be found whiter clothes than those that graced this pleasant dining hall. To be sure, the room was furnished in the plainest manner, but the sun yet lingered, and streaming through the lilac bushes and the elm branches, made golden pictures on the wall.

Nearly all were seated at the table when the new comer appeared, and every eye seemed attracted toward him. To such a face as his, granted but to few, the most hardened heart in the world might have opened. There was a mysterious sweetness traced over all those features, a something set upon that brow that seemed to distinguish him from the ordinary masses of men. He sat down; his place happened to be at the extreme end of the long table; cast a rapid glance from face to face, all intent upon him, and with one of his rare smiles, he lifted his hands, clasped them together, saying,

"Father, for these blessings, for thy journeying mercies, for thy holy love, for the dear

gift of thine only son, for all these, may we be truly thankful, for the sake of Jesus Christ Our Lord, Amen."

Consternation would be a weak word by which to express the tumult that followed. Not in language, not in action, but in the minds of all who sat there. The landlady, who was just in the act of raising the tea-urn, set it down again, her face turning white as a sheet. The half-suppressed smile lingered on more lips than one, while several were so confused, they appeared not to know for what purpose they had come together. An ominous frown blackened the features of the landlord; little Hager seemed almost terrified and gazed from the stranger to her father, as if she did not exactly know whether to cry or not. Austin Grande sat with eyes bent upon his plate, his thin lip curling with something like a sneer, though a suspicious glitter on his eyelashes told how powerfully that simple blessing craved, had moved him; his mother's voice spoke through it in those sweet tones.

But he who had been the cause of all this commotion, was the first to attempt its removal. His pleasant tones betrayed no astonishment at the blank silence that followed. With the grace of a natural gentleman, he passed whatever was in his way, speaking now to this one, now to that; and the ladies stopped toying with their spoons, the landlady lifted the tea-urn, though her hand shook, from some suppressed emotion; while young Grande, taking another glance at the fine face, with its luminous eyes, and innocent smile, sighed quietly.

It was beautiful to see how Guilford Coit held the attention even of those who were disposed to avoid him. His low but ringing, healthy-sounding laugh, was oftenest heard at the board, and the very youngest there seemed to listen and long for his voice. Still that innovation could not be forgotten.

Of all the four thousand inhabitants of Clifton Locks, not one of those placed over families, ever raised hands for blessings on God's daily-given food.

CHAPTER III.

THE LANDLORD'S RESOLUTION.

"WITH your kind permission, then, I am to room with you to-night;" said Guilford Coit, rising from his seat by the door, where young Grande and himself had been sitting, talking in the moonlight.

The evening was glorious. The grand old elms stood motionless in the mild, soft light, their black shadows lay as if cut in ebony across the white road.

"You are very welcome to do so," replied Austin Grande, as he too arose, and after glancing once in the calm face of his companion, turned his moody countenance heavenward.

"What fine evenings we are having, now," he said; "it seems as if the stars were unusually brilliant, to-night."

"The heavens declare the glory of my God," murmured Guilford Coit, in a tone of solemn pleasure. "Oh! my friend, what splendors, must be in reserve for us, His children, if He has made this poor earth so beautiful!"

Austin ventured no reply, only set his lips more firmly together, and made a slight, nervous motion with his shoulders.

"God never enters my soul so fully," continued Guilford Coit, "as when it is lifted up by the contemplation of such scenes as this. What majesty in His being! How matchless His mercy—His unbounded love!"

"Mercy!" muttered Austin Grande, the word seemed to spring from his lips, unconsciously.

Guilford Coit, turned suddenly, and fixed his dark eyes on the troubled face beside him.

"Do you doubt His mercy?" he asked, tenderly.

"I doubt everything," was the dull reply.

"O, no," said the new agent in a cheerful voice; "it seems you had confidence enough

in me, to offer me a lodging with you. How do you know what sort of a man I am?"

Austin Grande looked up, met the full luminous eye. The troubled cloud cleared away, the light of a trusting confidence shone in that glance.

"I can't doubt you, some way," he half whispered.

"Then, don't doubt the great God, whose servant, I am," responded Guilford Coit, smiling back upon him; "but, excuse me, I never allow myself late hours."

"I will come up, presently," said Austin Grande; he dimly foresaw that the stranger would wish, for a time, to be undisturbed.

Guilford Coit went into the chamber alone. It was a small, white-washed room, but scrupulously clean. The windows were hung with half-curtains of dimity; one narrow strip of home-made carpeting, stretched across the floor. The agent placed the little light upon the table, took from his trunk a bible, and knelt quietly down. Not long after, Austin

Grande came up. The light was still burning. The little bible, well worn, lay open, a mark against the page. Something prompted the young man to take a closer look at the holy volume, and his eye caught simply the words:

"*What is that to thee! follow thou me.*"

He started as if stung. A look of defiance passed over his face, instantly succeeded by an expression that seemed almost hopeless. He paused for a moment before the bed where Guilford Coit lay sleeping.

"What a glorious face that is!" he thought to himself. "How it attracts me! What peace rests upon every feature! Likely enough his lines have fallen in pleasant places. He has had no terrible temptations to encounter; no bitter, living trouble to cloud his days. It is easy for him to trust in God; easy for him to be what he undoubtedly is, a Christian." There was no bending of the knee, no prayer spoken, no sweet confidence between this young man and his Maker—but

the words followed him even into the world of dreams, "What is that to thee, follow thou me."

Meanwhile there had been a conference over the kitchen fire. The bar-room was tended on evenings by one of the hired men, for Tristam was fond of his ease, and generally sat and smoked, in the large, comfortable kitchen after the girls were gone to bed. On this night he had been unwontedly roused by the blessing asked at his table.

"If it wasn't that I promised him, the fellow shouldn't sleep here to-night," said Tristam, biting at the end of his pipe. "I should like to know what right he had to bring his cant into another man's house? He might at least have asked if 'twould be agreeable. I don't like him. He's one of your pious fanatic sort; I wont have him praying over the vittles."

"O, Tristam!" murmured his wife, who sat knitting a white stocking, "Somehow it done me good. I haven't heard a prayer before, as

I know on, for forty year. I just remember when father did that same thing, and he was counted a good man. Why you don't know how it came over me; I thought I should sink to the floor."

"Pshaw!" muttered Tristam, sulkily, "a woman's whim. Don't you see what it would come to, if I kept the fellow here? Not a blessed boarder could I depend on. Who wants to hear a parcel of Bible words when they set down to vittles? I tell you it will ruin the reputation of the house. People comes here because it's free and easy; no set ways or set rules. Besides, if he's one of the reg'lar pious ones, he'll be down on my keeping bar, and if he don't talk to me, he will to the boarders, and perhaps go to thinking he can reform things. Let him try it. If folks in this village don't make it too hot for him to stay here, I miss my guess. Who cares for prayers here? Who cares for meetins? Don't we enjoy ourselves just as we please, without no minister to come poking his pale

face in to tell us we're all going to ruin? I say I wont keep him. Let Col. Leffingwell find a place for him; if anybody needs prayers and them things, I'm sure he does, if what folks say is true."

Tristam knocked the ashes spitefully out of his pipe, and proceeded to fill it again.

"But Tristam," said his wife gently, "there was a time once —"

"O, you be quiet," interrupted the tavern-keeper, impatiently, "I know you'll say that I was under conviction, as they call it, but that was when I was green. And 'twas half caused by folks appealing to my vanity, and saying what a proper minister I'd make, and 'cause my heart was tender after the death of mother, but I've got bravely over that."

Hulda Saint, patient woman, only sighed.

"At any rate, he can't stop here."

"O! Tristam, don't say that."

"I do say it; I'll stick to it."

"O! husband, you can't think how different I feel since I know that a real, pious, praying

man is under our roof. We're both gettin' in years, Tristam, and to my mind this isn't just the way to go on; never thinkin' of God or heaven, or eternity. I don't feel satisfied," she continued, using more energy as she saw her husband was on the point of interrupting her; "my mind ain't easy, and it's hard to get light in this place, especially in a tavern, where one has to go through with so much work. Now, Tristam, don't you refuse to let that man stay here, for my sake. He'll have to eat his meals by himself in the morning, and I'm sure he won't mind if we change the dinner hour, and for supper let him have his way. I'll talk with the boarders, and if they don't care, why should you or I?"

"No use, wife. I tell you he'll be down on us, in every thing we do, and then, there's the bar. I—"

"Tristam," said his wife, earnestly, "you know we never kept no bar before colonel Leffingwell set his mills agoing. It isn't your bar, you only get so much on all the liquors

you sell, and to my thinking, we've never got along so well, since we began it. Look at that poor gentleman, who only came here six months ago, (and I'm sure he's a gentleman, and I'm sure his poor daughter is a lady) twice, he's tried to murder himself, after he's got liquor from your bar. I tell you, Tristam, if he'd really died that last time, after his daughter's coming here, and begging you so not to sell him drink, I do believe I should have gone distracted. It don't seem to me I could 'a lived. If I had, I'd been tortured all my life, with the thoughts of it. But I don't believe this young man will meddle with it, and for my part, I shall feel like another woman, with a real Christian, (as I know he is), sleeping under my roof."

"You talk just like a woman," growled Tristam, and he meant it for no compliment. The truth was, there were a few large tears running down the patient, sweet face, of Hulda Saint, and the inn-keeper knew how good, gentle and true she had ever been to

him, and how much he was indebted to her foresight, prudence and energy, for what worldly success he had met with, and being naturally an easy man, extremely fond of his wife, he could not bear to refuse her once for all.

"There's that rich young man, who came down for his vacation; he's tired of fishing, he says, tired of the country, and thinks he shall go home next week. Give this new agent his room; I'm sure he'll pay you well for it," said Hulda.

"Yes, next thing we shall be having prayer-meetings here," muttered Tristam.

"Hulda Saint's heart gave a great leap, as the thought "I wish we might," came uppermost, but she said, quietly, "he doesn't seem like a man who would force his opinions on people."

"Doesn't, eh? I should like to know if he didn't force that prayer on us, over the vittles? It looked like it, any way. I'll tell you; he shall stay here till it comes to a p'int like

that. If he behaves himself quietly, and don't meddle, why he's welcome; but if he begins to cant, and snivel and hint, or anything of the kind, out he goes, and Colonel Leffingwell may do the best he can for him. One thing I know, he'd find it pesky hard, getting along here. Folks hasn't got his notions in this part of the country, unless—" he laughed a little, "it's old work-house Goby, pious Goby. I wish 'tother agent had kept his fingers in his pockets, where they should have been; he was a clever fellow in the main, and I liked him better than this canting Coit, any way."

So it was determined, that for the time, Guilford Coit should be a boarder at the tavern.

In the morning, as had been arranged, the new agent and Austin Grande breakfasted alone, Hagar waiting upon the table. It was curious to see how stealthily and constantly the child, she was but fifteen, and looked much younger, watched the stranger. When he asked a blessing, her eyes followed his upward

glance, as if she expected to behold some unusual vision, and her motions were quiet, almost reverent, whenever she supplied his wants. The young man seemed in an unusually happy, even merry mood. His very face seemed as if a sunbeam had been let into some dark prison-place, diffusing light and cheer on whoever came near him. Austin Grande, on the contrary, was never in a gloomier mood. Sometimes it seemed as if he felt annoyed at Guilford's cheerful laugh, for his brows came together ominously, whenever he heard it. Still such was the charm possessed by Guilford, that in spite of himself, the moody young man relented at last, and left the house more cheerful in his manner. The mills were a good ten minutes' walk from the tavern. It was early morning, and but very few were stirring, as the bell had not yet rung the signal for the commencement of the day's labor. The stage was just being brought round in the road, the horses were led by an urchin in questionable attire, and hard by the

pump and water trough, an old man of venerable air, whose bald crown was ornamented on either side by long flowing curls, snowy white, bent over his task, sawing the wood which had been left the night before. The air was filled with farm-sounds. Hens with their broods, strutted leisurely about; the calves lowed in the barn, and on every side the myriad birds, all silver-throated and full of melody, sang a welcome to the newly risen sun.

"What a fine looking old man that is!" said Guilford, turning his head to gaze at the wood-sawyer.

"O, that's pious Goby," replied Austin Grande, with a sneer. "I guess he's about the only Christian we've got in these parts," he added.

"Ah!" said Guilford, "I must go and speak with him;" his face had grown suddenly grave, more because of the thoughtless manner of the young man, than for any other reason.

"I will walk on," said Austin.

"Very well, do so;" was the reply.

Guilford stepped toward the old man.

"Good morning, my friend," he said in a low voice.

The old man started, looked up, stopped the motion of his saw.

"My brother in Christ, I hope; is it so?" queried the young man, smiling, and holding out his hand.

"All who approach in that name, are welcome;" replied the wood-sawyer in a grave manner, and with the accents of a gentleman, meeting the pressure of that other hand. "Are you a visitor, here, sir?"

"I have come to reside among you some time," was the reply.

"What! are you the new agent, sir?"

"That is what they call me," replied Guilford, pleasantly.

"And a Christian?" still queried the old man.

"I humbly trust so," said Guilford.

"Thanks to His blessed name," exclaimed the old man, raising his hand reverently. "O, sir, I've been praying these ten years, night and morning; aye, it has been in all my thoughts, that God would send us one of His servants, for indeed, indeed, this is a dark place, sir; no gospel; no church; no Christ."

"Is it so bad as that?" inquired the young man.

"Well may you ask, sir. When I first came here, I was brought by an accident. Never was there a more wayward creature than I. Not always what you see me was poor Goldby, sir—oh! no, no;" and the old man shook his head.

"Sir, I've been rich and wicked," resumed the old man, for he had paused a moment, "I am now poor and dependent; an inmate of the work-house in winter—for you see when cold weather comes on, my injury affects me still, and I can't work at all. In summers I contrive to keep myself; yet, sir, in this fallen condition, as some might call it, I'm happier,

blessed be God, than when a wealthy blasphemer, I rode in my carriage and mocked the Giver of all good, oh, a thousand times!" He stopped a minute, wiped the gathering tears from his eyes, and said softly, fervently, as he looked up again, "I'm glad you've come; I hope you'll do us good, sir."

"I hope at least, I shall do you no harm," replied Guilford. "I am glad we have met. You and I will have some precious times together in the service of our Lord. I must bid you good morning; I shall see you again soon."

They parted; the old wood-sawyer looking gratefully after him, and with a lighter heart resuming his work.

The new agent did not overtake Austin till the latter was close by the mill. There he found him laughing and chatting with several young women, and not wishing to disturb him, he moved around to the other side of the mill, where he could see the race dashing on, throwing up a fine, glowing light as the rush-

ing drops glittered and danced, and swept by, taking in all the colors of the rainbow. The mills were situated at the base of a hill, where trees here and there nestled in groups, and wild flowers grew in crevices of the rocks that partly formed its sides. In sight was a rustic bridge, and on the left, crowning a gentle acclivity, the almost palace-like walls of Colonel Leffingwell's mansion, shone whitely in the sun. Beautiful vines wound about the pillars, and even at that distance, the stone vases upon the marble steps, the stone dogs, *couchant*, who guarded the portals dumbly, could be seen. All around were blooming terraces, highly cultivated, and from thence spread out meadows, orchards and intervale. As he stood there, the sound of horses' hoofs was heard, and presently came Colonel Leffingwell, on his gray mare, while following him, his daughter Mary rode her own milk-white colt.

"Upon my word!" cried Colonel Leffingwell, bowing to Austin, and recognizing Guilford,

"I was just going to take the tavern in my ride and call on you. So you arrived last night, of course; I expected you. My daughter, Miss Mary," he added, as Guilford came forward, hat in hand. The young lady bowed in a stately way, and, touching her steed, cantered slowly forward.

"Go on as far as you please, my love," called the colonel, placing the glove he had pulled from his right hand into the other, "I shall stop here a while with Mr. Coit." So saying, the colonel dismounted, and fastening his horse led the way into a small wing in which were the offices of the mill. Just then the bell struck, and as if by magic, the roads were instantly filled. A low hum sounded along the air, laughing girls thronged the passages, and the whir and whiz beginning not long after, told that the mighty machinery was moving its vast arms and capacious lungs for the fulfilment of its daily labor. For a long time the colonel and the new agent had been conversing in the little, but pleasant

office. Colonel Leffingwell, stood over the desk, at which he had been showing his books and explaining about matters connected with the mill-work. Now he appeared to be talking of other things.

"Yes, sir," he continued, "when I came here, some seven years ago, more on account of my wife's health than any other matter, Clifton Locks was a dead and alive place. No life, no stir, no ambition, nothing that was pleasant to a man of taste and refinement. I saw immediately that the people wanted waking up, and found that this fine stream was well calculated to give them a shock. I went to work at once and commenced a plan that I had long thought of. I built my mills and set them going as the people flocked in. I have given them no excuse for being unhappy, for the houses are all comfortable, convenient and pleasantly situated. I then went to work and managed to find amusement for them, by enlarging the old tavern, and adding a handsome hall, where they might enjoy themselves with

gatherings to their liking, get up dances, games and the like. My people are all satisfied that I wish them to be happy, and they treat me accordingly. Sometimes I go down and join in their sports, occasionally taking my son and my daughter. Thus you see I am as a patriarch over a large and pleasant family—in the style of the old English tenantry—where every land-holder was a father and a friend; a benefactor to both bodies and souls. I despise the stiff, lordly assumption of the modern aristocrat over the common people, as they term the working classes."

All this the new agent listened to, quietly; his face taking a variety of changes, as he agreed with, or differed from, the opinions of his employer. Colonel Leffingwell ended by inviting him to the next ball.

"I thank you very much for your kind invitation," he said, politely; "you will pardon me, I am sure, for declining to accept it, on the score of principle. I can easily fall in with much that you have described to me, but

as a professing Christian, you see I show my colors at once", he added, smiling, and appearing somewhat embarrassed: "I could not consistently make my appearance in a ball room."

"Very right; very right, I am sure;" said the colonel, in a sharp voice, after one quick glance of surprise. His face had grown quite red, and he turned almost abruptly away. In a moment, however, he recovered his presence of mind, also his politeness, and offered to take the young man in the mills. This he did; introduced him to a few persons, and then pleading business, left him to their care. Guilford was somewhat surprised at the change apparent in young Grande, for whom he had taken a sudden and sincere liking. Immersed in business, his face was lighted up by the interests that absorbed him. When he spoke, his face grew bright with smiles; he seemed not to be oppressed with the singular moodiness that hung upon him after work-hours. Guilford pondered upon this, afterwards; but at present his attention was called off upon

the busy scene around him. He looked anxiously along the lines of operatives. Right and left were rows of faces, many of them intelligent, vivacious and beautiful. For a moment, his heart was oppressed by the weight of the responsibility he found himself called upon to assume. "Give me grace, oh, God," he cried, from the innermost depths of his heart, "to fulfil my duty as in thy sight. O! make me the means of leading some of these immortal souls in the paths of peace and righteousness."

Moving further on, he was arrested by the bearing of a girl, who seemed to be nineteen or twenty-years of age in figure and face, but who betrayed, by a something, not exactly in manner or expression, that she was inured to suffering. There was an appearance of quiet dignity about her that was extremely pleasing. One would involuntarily think, without knowing why, at the first glance at such a face as hers, she is seeing or has seen some deep trouble; some misfortune that has brushed all the youthful bloom from her heart.

Near her, working almost at her side, was little Hagar Saint, her sweet, childish face, deep dimples, and fresh, rosy cheeks, formed a strong contrast with the style of her co-worker. Her blue eyes took on instantly that expression of deep awe that had marked her childlike sense of his superiority (to her mind) from the first. She did not even smile, when he addressed her, gently; but a look of quick, deep delight, passed over her face.

"That is the new agent, I suppose," said Sarah Church, gazing after him, as he walked forward.

"Yes," replied Hagar; "and you don't know how queer he is?"

"Queer!" responded Sarah, smiling.

"Yes. I mean good, of course; why he's so good—" added the girl, almost breathlessly, "that he prays every time he eats—only think of it!"

"Does he?" queried Sarah, quietly.

"Yes; did you ever know any one do such a thing as that?" asked little Hagar.

"O, yes," was the reply, and for a moment the girl's hands fell listlessly at her side; her eyes took on a far off look, and there were tears in them; "Yes," she said again, sighing heavily, "when I was a child, my mother always did; but—" the sentence was closed abruptly. What wonder; her father was a drunkard, and she supported him.

"Well, now, I never heard of it. Why ought everybody to be so good as that? I thought if we said 'Our Father,' in the morning, and 'Now I lay me,' at night, that was surely enough; don't you think it is?" and the bright blue eyes were raised earnestly.

Sarah hesitated for a moment. "Christians do not think so," she said, sadly; "but as I am not a Christian, I'm sure I can't tell you what to do."

"You not a Christian," queried Hagar Saint, simply, "why, I thought we were all Christians, provided we didn't do anything *very* wicked. I've always tried to be good to father and mother, and though I wanted money

ever so much, I didn't come into the mill a whole year ago, because they said they'd rather I wouldn't. If I'd coaxed very hard, I might—but I was afraid that would be wicked, and something might happen to me. I guess you're a Christian, for I've heard ever so many people say how good you were."

Sarah smiled, a little sadly, at this artless speech, and there was a long silence, broken again by Hagar.

"Are you going to the ball, to-morrow night?" she asked.

"I don't know," was the reply.

Sarah Church was very proud. Disguising her father's sin, as much as was in her power, she felt oftentimes as if the great disgrace was hidden from the world. Hence she strove to appear as brave as the bravest, and though she had not a decided inclination for scenes of pleasure, she yet attended them, that she might not give cause for people to say she could not go while old Church drank up all her money. Many sleepless nights she spent

in devising some piece of finery out of scant materials; and it pleased her father, who had once moved in high circles and mixed in fashionable pleasures, to see her thus employed. But the soul of this girl was never satisfied; it craved higher food. The noble self-sacrifice that prompted her to remain with her father, rather than accept the free offering of an honorable affection and the delight of a happy home, was only one of the phases of her finely constituted character. It gratified, in a measure, her yearning for something better, to feel that she was capable of, and could do, this good. But that there was a beyond, that haunted her, a possibility of duties and hopes and wishes unattained, yet within her reach, and for the neglect of which she must be responsible, was never absent from her mind. The words of Hagar, that the new agent was so good, that he prayed every time he ate, kept recurring to her. They brought to her mind a little picture that had been her mother's, and with which she had never part-

ed—'The Last Supper'—over which the Holy Christ presiding, held clasped hands, and called for a blessing before he should eat. Sarah was very silent, very thoughtful, for the rest of that day.

CHAPTER IV.

HAGER.

"MY HEART burns within me to do this neglected people good," thought Guilford that evening. The duties of the day were done, and the dusk was stealing softly over the hill tops, displacing their robes of gold and purple, for the more sombre raiment of night.

"Well, what do you think of us?" said a voice at his elbow.

The question was untimely; for the agent had but that moment been expressing to himself, his conviction of the great worldliness apparent in the population by whom he found himself surrounded.

"I think you are an industrious people," said Guilford, still looking away.

"But wofully wanting in the religious sen-

timent; perhaps you might add," rejoined Austin Grande.

"I perceive," replied Guilford, "that God is not in all their thoughts."

"Perhaps not in any of them," said Austin. "I can speak for one that yours would be in my case a true judgment."

Guilford turned and fastened a penetrating gaze upon the face of his companion. He did not appear to have spoken lightly; on the contrary there was a tinge of deep sadness on every part of his countenance, and his thin lips were painfully locked together.

"My friend," said Guilford, "you were a different man, when I saw you in the mill, to-day."

"O, there—yes," replied Austin; "my energies were all employed; my mind full, my hands and head busy. It is only in the excitement of action that I am—I wont say happy, but in a degree, satisfied; after that there's a void, unless there's something out of the usual way of going on—for instance, a

ball, or an agreeable gathering of some kind. I'm queerly constituted, I sometimes think."

"We are all of us queerly constituted," said Guilford.

"You, at least, appear to be an exception," returned Austin.

"Not by constitution, however," said Guilford, with a grave smile; "but—" he looked solemnly upward, then yearningly into the troubled face of his companion "by the grace of God, I am what I am."

Austin Grande first frowned, then sneered; the latter movement, however, was scarcely observable.

"You are what circumstances have made you," he said in a moment after.

"I am what Christ has made me," returned Guilford, softly.

"Yes, granted for a moment; but the controlling mediums of your life, of your religion, even, have been the positions in which you have been placed, and the aids or disturbances by which you have been surrounded. Let me

read your past: educated by a gentle mother; hemmed in on all sides by the best of influences; watched over; guarded from contamination, from moral pollution; growing up under careful eyes, and in the fear of God; nursed in church doctrines; fed upon clerical pap; folded at last in the loving arms of the church—have I read aright?"

"No, sir," said Guilford in a low, but very firm voice; "no, sir," he said again, in tones that were absolutely thrilling; "would that you had, and then much sin, much suffering, had been spared me. I have been through a bitter experience. I have had no mother from my birth; no father since I was seven years of age. Contamination from moral pollution, was almost certain in my circumstances. I have grown up under hard, evil eyes; no church has enfolded me in her friendly arms; I knew nothing of the fear of God; sir," he turned abruptly round, "I was once but little removed from the heathen; I was sunk down, down deep in the mire of in-

fidelity, from which no less that an Almighty power can save any man."

Austin Grande was silent—his lips, however worked uneasily.

"For my part," he said bitterly, "I have seen nothing but hypocrisy, double dealing, and anything but unworldly selfishness through my short career. What am I to do, when after pinning my faith upon this or that Christian, I find that after all, he has worse than my short-comings; for I, infidel, I suppose you would call me, could not stoop to the petty, mean, contemptible motives that actuate many of these people."

"He who pins his faith upon any mere mortal, deserves all the disappointments that may fall to his lot," said Guilford gravely; "and with regard to the failings of others, Christians or worldlings, remember what Christ, the infallible, says,

"*What* is that to thee? Follow *thou* me."

Austin Grande started; the very words his eye had caught—the very words that, since

the preceding night, had echoed through his brain. At all times he seemed to hear them; they were written on the sky; on the ground over which he passed; at intervals on the blank pages of the books used in his business, and even in the faces he saw. He threw off the impression, however, in a moment, and the hard, defiant feeling came back again.

"My father," he muttered, "made my life miserable; I have never forgiven him; I never *will* forgive him—never, never!"

"O! that is a hard saying," responded Guilford, a look of pain crossing his face. "Let me hope that you will both give and find mercy. Christ tells us that if a man hate his brother he cannot love God, how much less if he hate his father. Don't cherish such enmities, they are unworthy of you."

"If you had seen *your* mother dying the lingering death of the gambler's wife," said Austin Grande, hoarsely, "and not only of the gambler—" his voice broke down. It seemed as if some anguished memory filled

his soul—he turned away abruptly, and entered the house. Guilford gazed after him, yearningly, but respecting his grief, whatever it was, did not follow; he only said in the fulness and sorrow of his spirit, "give him to me, Lord, I pray thee, give me this one soul."

Guilford entered the tavern. In the low ceiled parlor sat Hager. Before her on a table were spread beautiful flowers and green leaves, from which she was selecting certain kinds to make wreaths. I have before said that this sweet young girl was unconsciously a poet. The finer pulses of a delicate and sensitive temperament vibrated through her organization. She was so constituted, that her heart was open to the holier influences of spirituality, and only waited to be enlightened before its tendrils would reach forth and cling to that mysterious support that we call faith. She had always been the sun and warmth of that house, had stood in the place of God in her father's soul, for unconsciously,

he worshipped her. Almost any other child so deferred to, so idolized, would have developed dangerous tendencies; not so Hager. She was a wondrously winning creature in any mood; now she seemed as fresh and beautiful as the flowers, and to an outward observer, as innocent.

As Guilford came in she half rose from her seat, while the peculiar awe of her countenance made him smile.

"Keep at work, Hager," he said gently, familiarly, "don't let me disturb you. What beautiful flowers! You have fine taste, my child," he added, lifting a bouquet that was just finished.

The young girl reddened with delight. Praise from one she thought of as superior to all she had ever seen in her little world, was something to be glad for.

"Thank you, sir," she said timidly; "I was never taught, but I love them so it seems as if I could do anything with them."

"And what festival are you preparing them for?" queried Guilford.

"O, for the ball, sir, to-morrow night."

"And you will attend, I suppose," he said.

"O! yes, sir;" her eyes sparkled, "there is nothing I like in this world so well as dancing. Don't you think it delightful, sir?" Something in his look abashed her; she turned her eyes away uneasily.

"I did once," he said in a very soft voice, "but I have found something better."

"Better than dancing?" murmured Hager, vaguely wondering what it could be.

"Yes, better than dancing, a thousand times better. And you would say so, if you knew just what I mean. I take more pleasure in one hour spent in communion with heaven, than others in years of these dissipations."

"I don't quite understand what you mean by spending an hour in communion with heaven," she said, simply, emboldened by his seeming confidence in her.

"And have you never heard of our Saviour?"

"Once in a great while," she answered, "and since you have been here, when you pray. Only my mother talks of him, sometimes."

"Is that all?"

"There's nobody here, that I know of, cares about such things," returned Hager.

"No minister?" queried Guilford.

"There is no minister here, sir."

"Where do you go to church?"

"I never go to church, sir," said Hagar, "they have none here, and it's seven miles to the nearest meeting-house—too far for me, sir, unless we kept a carriage. I thought you were a minister, when I first saw you,' she added blushingly.

He shook his head; he had grown very sad over Hager's answers. She silently took up the flowers, tied them together, and felt strangely nervous.

"How few," he said, rather to himself, "know of the great joy—so far more glorious than these earthly pleasures—a joy that

renovates instead of exhausting; that bears no regrets, no headaches, no tired limbs, no jealousies and heart-burnings. That joy is in the service of Christ Jesus, who loves us as no earthly being can; who died for us!"

That upward glance of holy fervor! the sweet, heavenly, trusting composure that irradiated every line of his face, and made of it a luminous beauty! that smile! not like other smiles—she, the unsophisticated girl, felt in her inmost heart, that nothing of earth could so transfigure the human countenance.

The sight, the words just spoken, her own exceeding reverence for the man who seemed a new revelation to her, so wrought upon her sensitive nature, that the tears welled up to her eyes and would not be restrained. He laid his hand gently on her sunny head, saying, "God bless you, my child! I did not mean to make you sorrowful. Be happy, Hager, happy and light hearted all the time; I like that; but oh! seek first the kingdom of God; you will say then that you never knew happiness before."

He left her alone with her new, strangely solemn emotions. Overhead in the long hall, her father and mother were busy getting things in readiness for the coming entertainment. She heard their footsteps but cared not to seek them.

CHAPTER V.

PIOUS GOLDBY.

"YOU WILL go in, of course," said Austin Grande, who was putting the finishing touches to his toilet. "You needn't dance, you know, and I always think it's worth something to see so many people in holiday attire."

"Thank you. I should not enjoy it at all; and could not conscientiously enter a place in which my principles forbade me to remain."

"What a parade!" muttered Austin Grande to himself.

"You Christians are altogether too strict for my notions," he said aloud a moment after; "an innocent enjoyment like that can harm no one."

"It has harmed me, however," replied Guilford, "and knowing that, feeling conscious

that I have in my heart something I would not exchange for all the joys of this poor earth —how can I go? Besides, it would be no pleasure to me; one cannot relish food for which he has no appetite—you will admit that."

Austin muttered a dissatisfied yes. Guilford walked away, came back a few steps irresolutely, then moved up near Austin and laid his hand on his shoulder. The young man turned, quite startled, and met those beaming eyes.

"For your own sake," whispered the agent, "allow me to hope that some time this merely exciting and temporary pleasure, may be as distasteful to you as it is to me. The water of the river of life is free."

Austin Grande changed color. Perhaps it was on his tongue to make some keen, unkind retort. If it was, the mild sorrow in those clear eyes, disarmed him, and the hand which he placed in that of his friend, trembled.

Guilford Coit knew enough of the entertain-

ments of those times, (not much altered are they to-day) to wish for a seclusion not practicable there. He had seen some of those beautiful flowers carried in the bar-room to decorate its polluted contents. That the weary dancers would resort thither for stimulants he saw was expected, indeed inevitable, and he had no wish to witness the degradation consequent upon intemperance. So in obedience to a long cherished desire, he left the house and wended his way to the poor-house, where lived "pious Goby," the veteran wood-sawyer. He found the old man seated outside the work-house, enjoying the soft, bland southern wind, that seemed to touch his white locks reverently. It was beautiful to note the glow of pleasure that instantaneously suffused the aged features.

"You are very kind, sir," he said, extending his hand, and half rising "I am glad to see you. Miss Mary came to the old place this afternoon; bless her sweet face! I didn't expect this favor from you so soon."

"You refer to the daughter of Colonel Leffingwell," said Guilford, taking a seat at his side.

"Yes, sir, you may have seen her; she is one out of a thousand, sir, in many respects. She knows my story, sir, knows that the poor old man was once blessed with beautiful daughters and brave sons, and she feels for me, sir. To others she may seem cold and reserved, they say haughty, but never to me, sir. It seems, sir, at times, as if that young lady was very near the kingdom. I wish she might give the beauty of her youth to Christ, for if there is one way more than another by which Colonel Leffingwell might be saved, it would be through his children. He idolizes them, sir. Did you ever meet his son, Merric?"

"I never did," said Guilford.

"A charming young gentleman," the old man went on, "just as sweet and good as his sister, to me. He has been going to college, but his health failed a year ago, and he has

remained at home until now. They think he is quite restored, but the consumption runs in the family, I have heard, sir, and I fear for him at times. A lovely young gentleman he is, and like his father, proud of his good name, trusting in his good works. I don't pass judgment on them, sir; they themselves allow they don't need Christ, sir; they say they don't. But oh! you and I, sir, know they do; know that the whole world needs him," he laid his thin hand on Guilford's knee, and his face was bright, yet solemn with an inward joy.

"Yes, yes, Christ is the only Saviour," murmured the young man.

"O! sir, if Miss Mary, if dear young Master Merric, if the old colonel only felt this as their need, what a place we should have here! There is not a more beautiful town than Clifton Locks; there is not one more destitute of all religious influences. There are churches in the other villages, but at such a distance that the people do not care to travel on foot.

There are those here, too, who profess themselves disciples of the Lord, who harness up and drive to God's house, come back in the afternoon and join in the sports that are carried on, on that day."

"Sports!" ejaculated Guilford, incredulously.

"Certainly, sir; the young men have games, there are drives and promenades, and often picnics on the Sabbath. Worse than all, the more dissolute get up cock-fights and dog-baits, as they call them. Ah! sir, you little know the extent of Clifton Locks' depravity;" the old man sighed as he ceased.

"I pity them the more," he continued, "because I have myself gone great lengths in practical infidelity. I was brought up in the very midst of fashionable society, and heard of God only as my nurse taught me to pray. I grew to manhood ignorant in a measure, of redeeming grace and dying love; for my Sabbaths were spent in pleasure. God took my wife from me, but that blow seemed only

to harden my heart. Then my two sons died, one of them a sudden and violent death; my two daughters, after they were happily married, died within a month of each other. These things almost broke my heart, but though I heard the voice of God in my affliction, and felt, in spite of all my reasoning, that He only could heal the wounds my grief had made, I would not bow to Him. After that it seemed as if my heart was set in me to do evil. I gloried in defying the Almighty. Becoming reckless in business operations, I first endorsed to a large amount, then plunged in speculation. Ah! sir, I woke one morning and found myself a beggar. There I was, no family; sons and daughters gone down to the cold grave; no wife to cheer me, penniless and friendless, for who befriends the ruined man of the world?

"Well, sir, defiant thoughts came into my brain. I felt that having gone to excess in pleasure, my constitution was hopelessly shattered, and what had I to live for? To my

darkened mind there was but one remedy for all my sorrows—death. After contemplating all kinds of desperate measures, I at length came calmly to the determination of taking my own life. The blank horror and darkness that enveloped my soul, no tongue can describe—oh! sir, a man without God is a pitiable creature! He can look nowhere for help. The faces of his fellow men might-as well be cut in stone, for he can see no sympathy there. They cannot enter into his feelings; they cannot see the dread despair that eats at his heart and cankers every thought. They know not of that hopeless sinking, that paralysis of all evil, that dreadful anguish that finds vent in groans without a voice, in hot tears that are never shed; in shrieks that shatter the body, though they may not be heard outside of its poor walls. I felt all this, sir. Waking, I was in torment; sleeping, in agony, for my dreams but repeated my sorrows. I could almost hear suggestions of evil that appealed to me on all sides; I felt

their import—it was that horrible temptation to rid myself of life. O, sir, I hope the sun, the blessed, blue daylight, never looked to you as it has to me—the memory of that time almost overcomes me. I believe, that verily, demons were fighting for my soul. And the worst of that unhappy state, was, my relentless hate of God. Words cannot describe to you the blackness of that hate. I was maddened to find myself so powerless to fight against Him. I looked upon him as the destroyer of all my hopes; the undying persecutor of my soul. If I opened a page that spoke of his goodness, I dashed it from me with bitter curses; a more utterly malignant spirit than possessed me then, the world of darkness does not hold. And all this, with the full knowledge that I had deliberately chosen evil, that it was not forced upon me—that I held the balance of my hardly earned retribution independently of all powers in heaven or on earth. Sir, I distinctly felt this; I believe every evil-doer feels it, and his contempt and

loathing of himself extend to every created thing, and above all, more malignant than all, to the great Uncreated, by whom all things are made. Finally, I took a deliberate stand. I spent my last cent for a railroad-ticket to a certain place, and determined in some manner to end my miserable life before the journey's end. I have not told you how proud I was, by nature. My temper had never been controlled, yet this pride enabled me to hide its paroxyms from everybody but myself. During this awful struggle, men saw me smile, heard me laugh, and though they knew that I was ruined, they expected to see me stem the tide and sometime enter into prosperous business again. So when I had made up my mind to end my struggle and my existence together, I was too proud to have men know it. They should not call me Goldby the suicide—never;—my death must appear to be the result of accident. O, sir! God was merciful," added the aged man, great tears streaming down the hollows of his

cheeks. "You remember, perhaps, the terrible accident of forty-seven; fifty people perished, and I, poor wretched sinner, was saved. I—the hater of God—the rash seeker for a dread eternity—I was saved! There were little innocent children mangled; there were brave and noble women crushed to death; there were great and holy and honorable Christian men sent to the eternal world, and poor miserable I—the outcast from self and heaven—I was rescued, with broken limbs, it is true, and sad internal injuries—but oh! for more than this, to be a monument of God's great forbearance—of His sweetly gentle patience, with the man who had longed to curse Him and die. Can you wonder, sir, at this emotion? Should I not be less than man if this poor frame did not shake, and these thankful tears fall, as I recount the Gracious goodness of my God?"

"When I came to consciousness, I found myself in a bed, luxurious for its softness, and around which hung beautiful curtains. But

oh! sir, the loveliest thing in that room of splendor was a little child of seven years, whose face was the first image of recognition. I can see it now—an angel's countenance, round which hung soft curls. It seemed to be one of my own lost children, restored to youth and innocence again. Presently I closed my eyes; the curtains were shut, the little face gone, but I could hear voices—the mother and her little one were talking."

"He looked at me," said the little voice.

"Yes," was the reply," he is probably conscious, but must not talk yet."

"Do you suppose he will die, mamma?" queried the child.

"I can't tell, my darling—I hope not," said the mother.

"Don't you suppose he'll be glad to see Jesus, if he does die?" queried the artless voice. "And if he does die, mamma, and talks before he dies, I'll ask him if he'll find little brother Robby in heaven. If he can't find him, Jesus will tell him where he is, wont he?"

"Simple as was this childish talk, my young friend, it thrilled me through and through. What! I see Jesus—I, loaded down with sins of thought and word and deed, and all manner of hate—I, see Jesus? I, look for a little lamb who died in his innocence and stood before Christ with holy hands? It is a wonder that the agony and remorse that rushed over me did not end my life. The vileness I felt at that moment, can never be described—never, never. I did not dare to raise my thoughts to God, even in gratitude. I was penetrated with shame; I was before *Him* then, the searcher of hearts, one mass of iniquity. I saw his eye upon me as plainly as I see yours. Moment by moment, hour by hour—yes, in that anguish it seemed years upon years, that Christ stood and looked at me. My every thought, emotion, shade of feeling, was read by His sorrowful eyes. I could see nothing else but that look and my own vileness. Everything I had ever done passed in review before Him and my heart—

yes, the book was opened there—the frightful book of my life.

"The doctor came to my bedside—I could see him—but still I saw that eye. "Is there no hope?" I cried.

"Your recovery is not altogether doubtful," he replied.

"No matter for that," were my despairing words, "let the body go—but is there no hope for the soul?"

"O! yes," he replied, and I saw his face brighten, "Christ says, 'come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

"I have hated Him too long," I cried weeping like a child.

"No longer than he has loved you," was the reply.

"I thought my heart would break when he said this. Had Christ loved me—He whom I had put to open shame, had not only despised but mocked—had not only mocked but cursed—could it be possible that He ever had,

ever would, love me? Pure as I felt He must be, could he touch my polluted hand; the hand that had led others into the ways of sin? If I could have experienced His instantaneous displeasure; had I have heard his voice condemning me in tones like thunder, it would have been relief—yes, even to be hated by Him—but to feel that He loved me, it was too much—oh! it was too much. It shook my soul to its foundations; it pierced me like an arrow; it condemned me utterly, and yet through all the mists, the darkness, the despair of sin, it shone down like a warm sunbeam; it penetrated the stony soil of my heart, it saved me, glory be to God.

"My dear sir, this emotion is too much for you," said Guilford, himself shaken at the recital.

"O! let me weep," cried the old man brokenly, "it is His mercy, His goodness makes me. The very rocks might melt if they had consciousness and could feel what it is for an immortal soul to pass from death unto life.

Think of it, sir, think of it!" and he lifted his thin arms upward, while the pure white light of the moon made his face saintly; "all eternity to praise God in; it will not be too long for *me;*" and the tears glittered on his furrowed cheeks like drops of silver.

"I have read of people being reprieved at the foot of the gallows, on the steps of the scaffold, and given back to blessed life again," he said in a softer voice. "I have thought what joy it must have been! how sweet, how full of blessedness the existence they had allmost given up! But what must that rapture be, think you, that reprieves an immortal soul? Have you felt it? Perhaps so, in some degree. I see that expression in your face that none wear but the children of God; still, unless you had gone the frightful length in sin that I had, you could not have quite the fullness of joy that I have felt, that overcame me I mean, the especial moment when I could cry *my* Father and my God!"

"And you convalesced at that house, I suppose."

"O! truly I did, I had nearly forgotten. It was the home of a physician; body and soul were objects of his care. Ah! that good man, that healing man! If all physicians were like him! Sir, every medical man should be an experimental Christian. How can men take the responsibility of such a profession, unless they know how to give comfort to the failing soul? Who like they can tell when the spirit gives notice that it is soon to quit its earthly tenement? It may be days, it may be weeks hence; the poor patient is flattered, *he* is not; oh, he should see with something else beside the eye of science; the eye of pity and holy tenderness. Who so easily as he in his daily visit, can drop a word that may save a soul? In the poorest and most wretched outcast he would behold a being capable of enjoying heaven; compassion and Christian charity would mingle soothingly in all his offices, he would gain the hearts that to all other influences would be hard as adamant. Such a man was Doctor Hall. How for

weeks he bore with my wayward unbelief, leading me gently along from doubt to faith! He is in heaven now, and so is that little child. O! blessed day that I first saw them!

It was nearly three months before I was able to move from my bed, but sir, the tottering wreck of a man who walked with pain, whose cheeks were haggard, whose eyes were hollow, bore in his heart the love of the Lord Jesus. He was a new man, wretched as he seemed; a whole man, miserably broken though he might have been called. Well, sir, I obtained light employment, but it was found that a posture of ease and confinement within doors were injurious. As long as I could, I worked and supported myself. On the death of Doctor Hall, I was taken violently sick, and became so reduced that a long confinement in the hospital ensued. Not to dwell upon my few reverses, I will only add that it was found advisable to change my residence to this place, and here I might be supported by private charity if I would, but I am hap-

pier as I am. My influence is limited, to be sure, but it is a blessing to have the little I do. There are a few Christians in this workhouse, sir; it is not late; suppose you go in with me and speak a word or two of comfort. There are some sorely suffering, sir."

As he said this the old man arose, and Guilford followed him into a dreary looking hall, out of which several doors opened into different rooms. A few aged paupers sat here at the long table, spectacles on nose, reading with great avidity. They looked up in a pleasant way to the old man as he came along, having a gentle word for each.

"Here, sir, is one of the saddest cases," said Guilford's companion, opening a door. At first sight the young man thought that he beheld a corpse, so deathly, so emaciated was the countenance that met his view. The eyes were closed, but the person was not asleep, as Guilford soon ascertained by noticing the figure. It lay extended on the bed, and was so thin that it made very little show under the bed-clothes.

"What is the matter?" queried Guilford, startled but interested.

"A case of spinal disease," replied the other; "he does not hear us, as he is quite deaf. But he has lain there, with no power to move any part of his body but his head for nine years."

"O, terrible!" exclaimed Guilford, deep pity in his face.

The old man had approached the bedside; he now bent down and spoke in a peculiarly distinct voice.

"How do you find yourself?"

"O! nicely, nicely to-night," was the response, accompanied with a smile, a very feeble smile, however.

"Have you thought of what I told you to-day?" asked the old man, still talking to the paralytic.

"O! yes, if He don't say in person, 'take up thy bed and walk,' He says in spirit, 'I will, be thou clean.'"

"You have remembered it well, David,"

was the response. "He is very feeble in mind," added the old gentleman turning to Guilford. "I have to prop him constantly. He has got so that he can repeat a text of Scripture through a day; two months ago he could hardly repeat it after me.

"Who is it says that, David?" asked the old man turning again to the patient.

"Jesus Christ, sir."

"And you want to believe in Him?"

"O, yes, sir—indeed I do."

"I can't make him comprehend;" continued old Mr. Goldby, "what he must do to become a Christian; that simple belief and trust in Him, are all that are requisite to give him a peace and joy beyond expression. But, poor fellow, his extreme patience and gentleness gives me hope that he is one of Christ's own children. I don't doubt that if I continue, never growing weary in this work of my Master, I shall have the satisfaction of seeing him happy in the love of God. You must pray for him, Mr. Coit—he's a great sufferer at times.

"Willingly will I pray for him, and assist you," murmured the agent; "this is a season of refreshment to me, thank God! that he has led me to enjoy as a pleasure, that which to the thoughtless souls in yonder ball-room would seem a task and a weariness."

"In this room," said the old man, looking cautiously in, "is a woman who is considered hopelessly, though harmlessly insane. She has seen a great deal of trouble, not the least of which is the desertion of her children. Still, I have some hopes that her mind is now more open to religious impressions than it has ever been. She will listen to me, when she will hear nothing from the rest. Sometimes she imagines, by my gray hairs, that I am her father, and when she does, I can easily impress her mind with religious truths. I have no doubt but she will ultimately find peace, and in that way be cured of her sad affliction. I think perhaps it would not be better for us to go up in the sick wards, but some day if you will come here, I can show you some interesting cases."

This Guilford assured him he would do. He was full of admiration for this old man, and noted the elegance of his conversation, the quiet grace of his manner, his unpresuming but deep piety, with unconscious surprise. The fact of having seen him at his humble employment, having heard him sneered at as "pious Goby," only strengthened his conviction of the sterling worth of this noble old man; nor was he surprised to learn that he was looked up to by the authorities of the town, that in fact, he was nominally at the head of the establishment, by virtue of his superior aptitude and eminent piety. Those who have little or no religion admire and trust it in others.

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE MILLS.

IT WAS with the consciousness of having spent a memorable and profitable evening, that Guilford, at a late hour, drew near the tavern. Long before he had gained its vicinity, the soft tones of harmonious music reached him. Divested of its coarser features and heard in connection with the calm evening, the radiant moonlight and his own thoughtful state of mind, its effect was rather soothing than otherwise; but as he drew nearer, the clash and crash, the sound of springing feet, (none the lightest), the loud, coarse laugh, and jingle of glasses, jarred on his spirit, and he could see the thoughtless revelry from the road.

"How gay they seem!" he murmured; "and yet there are bitter jealousies and cruel rival-

ries in that small space. How many of them, I wonder, will go with pure hearts to their bedsides to-night, and with prayers on their lips? Poor Austin Grande! striving to feed his soul on the miserable husks of folly; tasting of dead-sea-apples whose ashes settle in his heart; I wish he knew what real comfort and peace there are to be found in serving the only true God."

Was it a sigh, so close to him? He turned—there stood Austin Grande at the distance of a few feet only; he must have heard him. If he had, however, he did not imply it by his manner.

"It was so warm up there," he said, attempting a laugh, "I came off to get cooled, and was lying down here when you first halted."

"How are you enjoying yourself?" asked Guilford.

"O! royally—never had a better time in my life. Colonel Leffingwell has just gone—I came out with him, and pretty Miss Mary

has been there. Merric is over there now, you will like Merric—anything but one of your sort, you know; but then you're sure to like him, because he's one of the winning kind. Miss Mary asked after you, but her father told her you never attended balls from principle. I was close beside them, and you should have seen her open her eyes.

"Why! what kind of a man is he?" she asked, "and what do you think the Colonel answered?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Guilford.

"'O! he's one of the pious Goby sort,' ha, ha; I laughed in spite of myself."

"He gave me a high compliment," said Guilford, gravely.

"Yes, I s'pose you'd think so, but I can tell you Miss Mary did not. You should have seen her lip curl."

"The approbation of a greater than she fills my heart," said Guilford; "all the Marys and Colonel Leffingwells in the world have not power enough to draw me from Christ.

I dread neither their sneers nor their contempt. I wish neither for their favor or applause, save in the way of my duty. My foundation is a sure one—heaven help them it their's should fail them!"

Austin Grande was suddenly silent. He walked on with Guilford to the door. Two or three half-drunken men talked idly and wandered round, still the mixing of liquors could be heard, and voices calling for more. There they parted, Guilford to seek his chamber, which was on the opposite side of the house, Austin to join the dancers, but with an awakened conscience and uneasy mind.

Very sweet was Guilford's communion with God, that night. He knelt down near the open window to be farthest from the noise and confusion, and there, tracing the handwriting of his God amid the stars, he remained in a silent trance of love and adoration. "Thou art giving me larger shares of grace," he murmured, "because thou dost see my new, and enlarging temptations, my new and

perhaps bitter trials. Father, I thank thee that thou dost deem me worthy. Thou hast taken me from the pit of miry clay; henceforth I am thine, do with me as thou wilt."

Some little time before sunrise, but when its coming light made objects perceptible, Guilford was awakened by a slight noise. Austin Grande had just seated himself at a window. His throat was bared, his thick hair thrown back from a flushed forehead, and his eyes were restless.

"What! are you up so early?" asked Guilford, half lifting himself from his pillow.

"Up! you don't suppose I've been to bed, do you?" asked Austin with a short laugh.

"Haven't you really been to bed, at all?" queried Guilford, in astonishment.

"No, to be sure I haven't," replied Austin. "I can never go to sleep after a dance; my temperament is such a wide awake one when there's anything exciting going on. I should make a queer Methodist, I fancy, should live on faith and sleep on hallelujahs."

"Don't, don't! Austin," said Guilford, in a hurt tone, "don't make sport of religion. You'll be sorry for it, some time."

"I may turn out as good a Christian as you, yet," said Austin, lightly."

"O! don't say that," cried Guilford, still in the same tender tones of remonstrance, "you make me feel my shortcomings wofully. That you may be a Christian is my fervent prayer, but take Christ, and Him only, as your pattern."

"I can't say that I am particularly anxious," replied Austin, in whom the spirit of vindictiveness was rising, "it is not my way to parade my feelings, and make a show of my principles on all occasions. If religion calls for that, I'm sure I shan't become a disciple. You professors think that if a man enjoys himself, he must go to perdition. I hate such narrow mindedness; I tell you I hate it!"

Guilford was silent for some moments, then he said, gently, most sweetly and gently, "wouldn't it be better for you, my friend,

to lie down and get a little rest? I'm afraid the day's duties will be too much for you, if you don't."

"Don't worry," said Austin, curtly, ungraciously, and yet the tears stood in his eyes. He was angry with Guilford because he felt how immeasurably above him were the rules upon which he formed his life; still, he was angry also with himself that he allowed the mastery of his evil disposition, for with all his bitter language against religion, he vaunted himself upon his morality, called himself better than many who were not of the world.

"I believe I will rise," said Guilford, a moment after.

"I suppose you want all the room there is here, to pray in," said Austin, and with this unkind, ungracious speech he left the chamber.

It was not long before Guilford, who had been some time through with his toilet saw the face of Austin at the door. In he came, impulsively.

"Guilford," he exclaimed, "I want you to forgive me."

"My friend," said the agent, with smiling earnestness, "I have nothing to forgive."

"Don't say that. I have been most impertinent to you, this morning. The fact is, things went wrong last night, and just now I was n't quite myself. Don't look so horrified; I mean that I was cross, hateful, bearish; I never drink, you will find me guiltless of that fault, whatever else I do. I won't ask you to put up with my waywardness, that would be too much; but please remember that I am a poor, nervous being, easily influenced; would to heaven I were not," he added, almost passionately.

"Austin, will you let me say—"

"No, no; don't talk to me now, I beg," cried the young man, stepping back a little; "I shall only say something that will hurt your feelings. But putting religion aside, I am sure I wish to act like a gentleman, and somehow when you mention some things, it heats

my blood, and I feel the risings of a temper that is not easily stirred. But Guilford Coit, understand me, I like you; don't feel that you are in the way, though you would be quite justified in leaving my company this minute. I like *you*, but I have an unaccountable dislike to your profession. However, if you are all right, perhaps you are; perhaps I am wrong; who knows what may happen in time? I am not a happy man, I long ago gave up the hope of ever being one. To speak the truth, I am often weary of my life. Why? That I can't tell you. I love to look in your face sometimes, there is such a peace there; I shall never know peace, never, never."

"Do you forbid me to speak to you upon the important subject of your soul's salvation?" asked Guilford, solemnly. "Dare you take the responsibility of a command involving such weighty consequences?"

"I don't wish a word said about it, not a word," exclaimed Austin, briefly.

"Then you and I must part," said Guilford, sadly, quietly.

"Part! why?" exclaimed Austin, almost breathless.

"I love you too much already, to leave you in your fancied security. If I am where you are, I must speak to you of Christ."

Austin turned away. It was singular how deep an affection for this stranger had sprung up in his heart; seemed so deeply seated that it gave him a pang to feel that they might be separated. His features worked with emotion, a struggle was going on in his soul.

"I will tell you what I *will* promise," said Guilford, deeply moved, "not to intrude upon you at unseasonable times; to wait till you seem to lead, as you have on several occasions, as you will again, believe me, for the spirit is not done with you yet. Austin, my friend, will you let me promise this?"

Austin walked rapidly to the window. A sense of such utter desolation had come over him at the thought of losing the constant companionship of this noble young man, that it amounted to absolute pain. And yet, the

hatred, it can be called by no more gentle name, that possessed his heart and his imagination towards the humility and self-denial, and lowly-mindedness of the religion adopted by his friend, sprang up, fiend-like, and importuned him to give no heed to his counsels, to break with him, rather, then and there. But a better spirit prevailed. Whether he saw the mournful eyes of the mother, who amidst all her suffering had been the gentlest of Christians, whether he heard her voice pleading in the secret recesses of his heart, or whether the mere admiration of the agent, the magnetism, as it were, of a finer and nobler nature than his own, attracted his sympathies, cannot be told.

"If you will wait till I lead, or seem to lead," he said, extending his hand, frankly, "then I give you permission, with all my heart, for I can't lose you."

"Thank you! God be thanked!" said Guilford, fervently. At that moment the bell rang for breakfast. Little Hager stood at her

post, as usual, but the eyes, wont to be so sparkling, the cheeks, usually rose-red, were languid and pale. The dissipation of the previous night told upon her with startling effect; she looked sad, jaded and wearied. She brightened a little when Austin asked her about the ball.

"I never enjoyed myself so much in my life," she said frankly; then as she marked the pitying glance of Guilford, she blushed crimson, for she had heard the whisper that went the rounds of the ball-room, that this young man thought it a sin to spend time in such amusements, and she felt in her very soul, little as she had thought of such things, that it was no place for him. But if wrong for him, why was it not injurious for her, for those who had spent the night in such a scene of vanity and frivolity? This thought was but the opening wedge for others. She began to analyse her own motives, in a vague and childish way, to be sure, for it was a new occupation to her, but none the less seriously

and faithfully. She brought the scene before her. There was Betty Day, whose mother was so poor, whose little brothers and sisters were never decently clothed, and yet there was Betty, one of the best dressed girls in the room, with showy gold ear-rings and a gold bracelet, all bought at the expense of proper food and clothing for the poor mother and little brothers and sisters at home. If it were not for this exciting pleasure, perhaps Betty would think more of her higher duties, but she was vain and wished to look as well as the rest. Then there was Frank Alford, who they said if kept away from the sight of liquor would never touch it; how terribly drunk he was, and how some of the others, who ought to know better, would coax him down to treat them. She knew there must be a large score against him on the wall of her father's bar, and her cheek grew hotter than ever at the thought of the poor, kind old mother, from whom so much of her daily support must be taken at the end of the month—for it would

break fearfully into his wages, and what had he to show for it, save the disgrace of the sot?

She turned to Sarah, who had her own sad thoughts, and said, "what do you think, Sarah; you know how it was last night. Isn't it all wrong?"

"Wrong about dancing, do you mean?" queried Sarah.

"About such times as we had last night. Didn't you see how badly some of the men behaved?"

"O! that's because they had been drinking."

"But *he* thinks it's dreadful, I know," said Hager, her clear eyes taking on a serious light.

"And who is he, pet?—our new agent, I suppose you mean. I noticed he was nowhere to be seen. No, he wouldn't go, because he's a professor of religion, and they never attend such places, and never ought to," she added thoughtfully.

"Then if it's wrong for them, why isn't it for us?" queried Hager, earnestly.

"Perhaps it is," responded Sarah, in a low voice, a flush coming to her cheek; "that is so far as it makes us wish for the pleasure for the sake of being seen, of showing off finery, or enjoying the mere excitement of motion. I never felt so tired of it as I did last night; some way I was provoked with myself for going."

"Maybe Mr. Coit will make us all feel so," said Hager, innocently. "You don't know how solemn like, and yet it was beautiful, he talked to me the night before. I was making wreaths that are all faded now, poor things, and he told me what fine taste I had. He asked me did I like dancing; and I told him how much I enjoyed it. Well, I can't remember all he said; at any rate, he spoke of having higher pleasures now; he had given himself, he told me, to the Lord Jesus Christ, and found, oh! so much joy in serving Him. You ought to have seen his face when he said it. Then when I said we had no church, why! you never saw any one give such a

look—it made me feel as guilty ! and I'm sure I never thought of the thing before."

"Is that all he talked about;" asked Sarah Church, her eyes bent on her work.

"Yes, that's all he said then, but somehow there's something about him that's always talking even when he don't speak a word, he looks so good!"

"So he does;" said the drunkard's daughter, thoughtfully.

CHAPTER VII.

A SABBATH DAY'S JOURNEY.

THE Sabbath day came, sunny and serene. Tristam Saint had held several conferences with his wife with reference to the new agent, while at the same time he had sedulously kept himself out of his way. It was strange, but true, that Hulda Saint had seemed a different woman since Guilford Coit had come to the tavern. She had always been a quiet body, meek and placid, but now from under the quaint, frilled border of her cap, her eyes looked with a more contented light, for she often said to herself. "I know good will come of it. I was certain from the first, that good would come of it."

Tristam Saint always made a show of keeping his bar closed on the Sabbath.

"I'm glad of that," said Guilford, pointing to the barred door.

"Glad of what?" echoed Austin Grande.

"That our landlord keeps his bar closed on the Sabbath. I was afraid he did not."

"Neither does he, there's a back door to this establishment," replied Austin, sententiously, "*that's* open all day and many a good customer goes through it, too."

"Is that a fact?" queried Guilford, in consternation. "Worse and worse; if this thing continues I must either remonstrate or leave my boarding-place."

"What good do you think you would do?" asked Austin, with an incredulous smile.

"I should do my duty," replied the young man. "Now if you were with me, might we not move the town? Christ has given a great promise to only two or three met in his name."

"Never mind," replied Austin, uneasily, "I tell you once for all, there's no use in talking with me. I don't see things as you do; I can't; it isn't in me. I shall try to do right,

but as for this extra work, this going through a spiritual mill to be ground over, I don't believe in it, and what's more, it is at variance with my common sense; I can't believe it."

"It is not at variance with the Bible," said Guilford, softly.

"There it is again. The Bible, don't you see, my friend, is to me like a kaleidoscope, which shows to every one, different forms and colors, although the same bits of colored glass give shape to the varying figures."

"I hope you do not compare the words of One who spake as never man spake, to worthless, painted glass," said Guilford, rebukingly.

"Pshaw! don't take things so seriously; of course I have respect for the old writers of the Book of books, as it is named, for him who is considered the Saviour of the world, and all that; but then, my meaning is this, I don't translate the Bible in your language, Perhaps what you would call white I should call black and *vice versa*."

Guilford was pained at this return of levity.

"Take a cigar?" said Austin, coolly offering one of the costliest.

"No, I thank you, Austin; I gave up my cigars not long after my wine drinking, my billiard-playing, my theatre going; no more cigar smoking for me."

"Come now," and Austin surveyed him with a cool, steady stare, "you don't pretend that you consider cigar-smoking a sin; I might agree about the other things, and even those I should only dub follies, but the idea that smoking is a sin, that's what I call ridiculously fanatical. For goodness sake enlighten me, what sin do you make of smoking, you old young man, you?"

"I was thinking," said the other, coming out of a little brown study that had left some agreeable reflection in the form of a smile that touched lip and brow with sunshine, "of old aunt Ann Phipps."

"What in the world has that to do with cigar-smoking?"

"Much every way with mine. Aunt Ann Phipps was a queer old woman, and because queer, neglected. She had a house, such as it was, the foolish boys called it Jolly Castle. There was scarcely more than one room at all habitable, but aunt Ann managed to live in that. The poor old soul was a church-member, but had grown strange in her years, and neglected the "meetin," as she called it. There was something disjointed in her poor mind. Probably a long life of poverty had embittered her. What made matters still worse for her, she had a brother who was very rich, who in town lived in style, and utterly ignored the poor soul because she was not as others were. Shall I go on about aunt Ann Phipps?"

"Certainly, tell your story, though I don't see what that has to do with smoking."

"You shall. Aunt Phipps is forever daguerreotyped on my memory. She wore a red calash, a green veil, a short black quilted petticoat that came only to her ankles, a bedgown, as the people used to call it, looped up

in a ridiculous fashion; in short, had she stepped out of some antique picture-frame a hundred years ago, she could not have looked more provokingly queer. I never met her without such an inclination to mirthfulness as obliged me to turn my head. I believe people got tired of old aunt Ann. Her bluntness, for she was always saying the most unpleasant things in an aggravating way of her own, made her visits distasteful. She was tolerated by the lady I then boarded with, but she frequently returned her kindness by ungrateful remarks. I remember her saying once when she came in, 'Miss Butts, that cheese you gave me wasn't fit for a dog, child, I don't see how your boarders can eat it.'

'Why didn't you bring it back!' asked the good lady.

'La! I gave it to the cat.'

"And yet with all this eccentricity there was genuine good in the woman. She was scrupulously neat and clean, and her one great trouble was the fear that she might yet have

to go to the poor house. For an old woman like her, she certainly fought hard to keep the wolf from the door. She planted her own little patch with vegetables and knit and spun while she had any strength. It was a picturesque sight to see her sitting in the low doorway of the ruined house, the high colors which she always contrived to wear, contrasting with the gloom and dinginess within. Old aunt Ann Phipps always smoked a short pipe."

"Ah ha!" said Austin, "there comes the moral."

"No, it don't—for Aunt Ann smoked till she died. Nobody had the heart to interfere with her privileges, poor lonely old soul. One day, a friend of mine was going by the ruined house with me. We heard sounds of distress within, and entered. There was the old creature almost in convulsions, because they were going to carry her to the poor house. She was ill, and could not work. The poor soul cried piteously, only to die at

home—only not to be disgraced! 'O, Mr. Coit,' she pleaded, holding out her withered hands, 'save me—and the blessing of the poor and needy will follow you through life.' Her streaming eyes, piteous tones, and gray hair, appealed to me powerfully. I said at once, "let her stay, gentlemen, I will be responsible for her expenses." We went out, Adam and I, and stood there looking at each other."

"It will be at the least calculation, two dollars a week," he said, "and you are by no means rich." Suddenly, it occurred to me, that my last year's cigar bills averaged a dollar a-week, and said I, "I'll give up my cigars—that will pay one half."

"I don't intend to be outdone," Adam responded. "I'll give up my cigars; and the miserable old creature shan't go to the poor-house." We shook hands upon it, and were both, I doubt not, better men for the self-denial. For six months, we took care of old Aunt Ann. She never needed eyes, for we

went regularly to the tumble down cottage, and read to her by the hour. Her mind grew clearer towards the last. The broken faculties were re-united; the clouds lifted, and the lessons of her dying hour were sublime; I never have forgotten them. But here comes in the moral. Finding that cigars contributed but little to my happiness, I have never touched them since, and I have thus made a clear saving from that time to this, for the benefit of the poor and needy, of nearly eight hundred dollars. Now, you see, my friend, that sum would have been expended in smoke."

"Rather convincing." And Austin put his well nigh exhausted cigar to his lips, and puffed softly. "I, however," he continued between the light spirals that went curling up gracefully, "am a very hardened sinner, I expect. The fact is, I love my cigar. It soothes me under my varied trials; it consoles me for repeated disappointments; it is in fact—"

"Your substitute for religious faith," said Guilford, smiling.

"Well, to be candid—yes; I suppose it is. You take a fellow up so quickly! but, I suppose that's the amount of the matter. I don't feel any particular movings of religious faith, that's certain—and I *do* feel better for a good cigar. Yes: I suppose it comes to that." He laughed as he spoke, but he was conscious of a dead weight upon his soul, and an inner longing that all possessions failed to satisfy. He was far from being happy, and that consciousness mixed gall in his cup of pleasure.

It was a charming walk for Guilford along roads scented with thousands of dewy flowers. It seemed as if the birds sang more sweetly, because it was the Sabbath morning. The people were not yet stirring; no smoke came from the chimneys of the farm houses. Softly from tree to tree whispered the bland voices of summer. How beautiful the fields were, their feathery plumes swaying before the light winds! Lowly they bent in the presence of their Maker, those ranks of corn, those armies of wheat, doing battle only with air

and sunshine. The hallowed nature of the holy day seemed to brood over all inanimate things.

It was a long walk, but in such sweet communion had the time passed, to Guilford, communion not only with nature, but with nature's God, that he was quite taken by surprise at sight of the plain white spire, rising beyond the thick foliaged trees.

O! it was good to see that house of God, good to see the well-dressed people flocking to its pleasant doors.

Happy as he had felt before, a new joy possessed him as he entered the sacred place and bowed before his Father. As he sat there revolving many thoughts of the years gone by, in his mind, the peace of God that passes all understanding filled him with joy unutterable. He felt as if he could almost see Jehovah, face to face, and earnestly went up that wrestling cry for Austin, "give me *his* soul, oh, Lord!"

Then was the worship of the day begun.

A venerable man led in a simple, seasonable, heart-felt prayer. Next came the melody so sacred to every Christian heart, dear OLD HUNDRED. How the solemn strains of that glorious tune carry us back to the times of the reformers, Luther and his devoted band! He, doubtless, was the first to strike the grand old chords in the public sanctuary of his own beloved Germany. From his great, stentorian lungs they rang, vibrating, not through vaulted cathedral roof, but along a grander arch, the eternal heavens! Each note was inwrought with his own sublime faith, and stamped with that faith's immortality. Hence it cannot die. Neither men nor angels will allow it to pass into oblivion.

Can you find a tomb in the land, where sealed lips lie that have not sung that tune? If they were gray old men, they had heard or sung Old Hundred. If they were blue-eyed babes, they smiled as their mothers rocked them to sleep, singing Old Hundred. Sinner and saint have joined with the endless con-

gregation where it has, with and without the pealing organ, sounded on sacred air. The dear little children, looking with wondering eyes on this strange world have lisped it. The sweet young girl, whose tombstone told of only sixteen summers, she whose pure and innocent face haunted you with its mild beauty, loved Old Hundred, and as she sang it with closed eyes, seemed communing with the angels who were so soon to claim her. He whose manhood was devoted to the service of his God, and who, with faltering steps, ascended the pulpit stairs, with white hand placed over his laboring chest, loved Old Hundred. And though sometimes his lips only moved, away down in his heart, so soon to cease its throbbings, the holy melody was sounding.

The dear, white headed father, with his tremulous voice, how he loved Old Hundred! Do you not see him now, seated in the venerable arm-chair, his hands crossed over the top of his cane, and a tear, perchance, stealing

down his furrowed cheeks as the noble strains ring out? Do you not hear that thin, quivering, faltering sound now bursting forth, now listened for, almost in vain? If you do not, we do; and from such lips, hallowed by fourscore years service in the Master's cause, Old Hundred sounds indeed a sacred melody.

You may fill your churches with choirs, with Sabbath prima donnas, whose daring notes emulate the steeple, and cost almost as much, but give us the spirit-stirring tones of Old Hundred, sung by young and old together. Martyrs have hallowed it, it has gone up from the dying beds of the saints. The ancient churches, where generation after generation has worshipped, and where many scores of the dear dead have been carried and laid before the altar where they gave themselves to God, seem to breathe of Old Hundred from vestibule to tower-top; the very air is haunted with its spirit. Think for a moment of the assembled company who have, at different times and in different places join-

ed in the familiar tune. Throng upon throng, the stern, the timid, the gentle, the brave, the beautiful, their faces all beaming with the inspiration of the heavenly sounds.

"Old Hundred: king of the sacred band of ancient melodies!" thought Guilford; "never will my ears grow weary of hearing, or my tongue of singing thee! And when we reach heaven, who knows but this will be the first triumphant strain that welcomes us,

'Be thou, O God, exalted high!'"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DRUNKARD'S DELIRIUM.

A SABBATH day's journey nearer heaven, did that delightful season seem. Guilford dreaded to leave this pleasant, God-fearing village, for Clifton Locks. Its noise, its dreary, worldly aspect, came upon him as it never had before in contemplation. It seemed to be a place self-exiled from the light of God's countenance. He passed from the pleasant burying-ground where he had been musing over graves, and almost with reluctance took his way home. The heat of the day was over, and the sounds of nature more animated than when he had passed over the same road in the morning. Children smiled at him from farm house-gates, and stout dogs gave friendly greetings. Here and there might be seen the cows on their homeward

track. Sometimes the young man paused to hear a sweet strain of old familiar music as it floated out of cottage windows. Now and then he met an aged man, tottering out by the roadside, for whom he made obeisance lower than he would to a crowned king. The flowers by the way, were dusty, but their fragrance still came pleasantly up. Never did the sky look fresher, bluer, fairer; never did the smoke curl heavenward with more grace and lightness; never seemed the trees such pleasant things, throwing long shadows.

Nearing Clifton Locks, the first sight he saw was a brace of young men, coatless, bearing fishing lines, while in baskets by their side, the dying trout leaped and lay gasping. Then as he passed these he heard a drunken song, and several couples, men and women, glided in and out of a small pine grove, where they had doubtless spent the day. The farther he went, the heavier grew his heart. Nature was just as beautiful; but man was vile, thoughtless, Godless.

"It must not be so," he said to himself. "There must be a change; some influence must be brought to bear upon this town, Jesus Christ, must be preached."

"Just then he turned aside at the sound of horses' feet. A gay cavalcade swept past, headed by the Colonel's daughter, the winsome, high-hearted Mary Leffingwell.

"Alas, again," thought Guilford, as he bowed cooly; "there is all the company of Rose-Hedge passing the day in sport and pleasure; how can it be expected when such as these profane God's Sabbath, that the people who toil all the week, will sanctify one day in seven? Alas! beautiful, vain girl, God will not hold you guiltless in this thing, and may He give me grace even to say the same to you; to speak the truth in the fear of Christ."

He was now nearing a by-road or lane, on the outskirts of Clifton Locks, in which stood but one solitary cottage, very small and mean. As he passed by there, it seemed to him he

heard strange sounds. He paused a moment, intently listening. He had scarcely comprehended the nature of the disturbance before the door opened, and Sarah Church appeared on the step, gazing wildly round. Her hair was dishevelled, her eyes red with weeping, and altogether her manner and appearance were calculated to fill any heart with sorrow.

"What can be the matter with this poor girl?" said Guilford, half aloud, as taking a few steps, he presented himself before her. She saw him; her cheeks crimsoned with shame, but her terror impelled her to cry out,

"O! sir—my father! my poor father!"

"What is the matter? pray tell me," asked Guilford, entering the narrow, neglected yard. "If I can help you in any way, command me."

"My father, sir, is very unfortunate," and as she spoke the tears began to fall, rolling piteously over her cheeks. "He indulges sometimes in drink, sir, and to-day—" she

sobbed, almost losing her self-control, "he went down to the tavern after he had promised me—" she could get no further. Guilford pitied her in her distress as he had never pitied any one before. To see a daughter forced to expose the sin of an only parent, is of all sights, the saddest.

"He is silent, just now," murmured Sarah, listening, "but it will not last long. O! sir, he has very nearly accomplished an awful purpose, twice before, and now he is alone with me, if"—she shuddered, the thought was too terrible for utterance.

It was not long before sounds of anguish filled the air again. It was a fearful sight, the strong man, athletic, handsome, his livid face looking out from great meshes of snow-white hair, his eyes almost starting from their sockets.

"Save me, child, save me," he cried, as his daughter entered the room, "there are ten thousand devils here; they want to tear my soul from my body; to clutch my beating

heart out by the strings and leave me mangled and bleeding; oh, heaven! heaven that I have mocked, save me!"

"Have you a Bible near?" asked Guilford, in a low tone, "if so, bring it here."

The frightened girl took from a broken book-case the sacred volume that had belonged to her mother. Guilford opened at the fly-leaf where, in a large bold hand, a name was written, and held it before the dilated eyes of the rum-maniac.

"O! I see, I see!" he cried tremblingly, "it is written on a tomb-stone in a grave-yard. Where is it Sarah? Where did I bury your mother! Did she have any cause of complaint against me, after *she was dead?* Answer me that, girl. Did I not buy her a fine tombstone and place it — where, where my child?"

"His mind began to wander again. That fearful look of mania potu, that gathers in one convulsed expression, shot over his face as he turned away with moans and cries for mercy;

cries that tormenting fiends were over him. "O! save me! save me for the sake of my poor child, save me from their torture!"

Again Guilford held up the Bible, with a vague hope that the sight of it would restore him. "Ask Christ," he said solemnly, "He will save you."

"Christ, Christ! Where is He? Give me that book; is He in there? Oh! they are coming! Show me what I shall do. Give me the Bible, they *dare* not touch that," and he snatched the sacred volume and held it to his bosom convulsively.

"Find the name of Christ," he cried again more agonized than before, "quick, quick, find me the name of Christ. See they are pouring fire all over me. O, I am in flames, they torment me! they torture me; find me the name of Christ."

Guilford turned to the name of the Saviour, he placed his shaking finger upon it, crying, "O! Christ have mercy, don't let them tear me; see the fire! it runs from their hands,

their lips—see, they are throwing it all over the Bible, but it don't touch the name of Christ; oh! Christ save me!"

Thus did this victim of the thrice-accursed rum-traffic, rave, imploring with piteous shrieks, the legions of phantoms that crowded and yelled and menaced, to let him alone. He clung to the Bible in all his agony; he clung to the name of Christ, until, exhausted with his fearful struggle, he sank into a strange stupor that looked like death. Guilford provided aid for the unhappy man, and then left the cottage, his heart sinking within him as he thought of all he had seen and heard since he left the pleasant church in which he had worshipped.

It was nearly dark when he reached the tavern. Austin lay stretched on the settee outside the door, composedly smoking. He seemed to know Guilford's step, for he sprang up as he neared him, with an expression of hearty welcome.

"I'm tired as a dog," he said languidly, in

reply to Guilford's question. "It's no fun to ply a couple of oars, with a hot sun raining fire upon you."

Guilford shuddered; he had so recently heard those fearful words, and in connection with such circumstances!

"*You* look a little under the weather," said Austin, scanning his friend closely, "didn't your walk agree with you?"

Guilford assured him that it did; then related the scene that had so unnerved him.

"Terrible! terrible!" exclaimed Austin, "but the old fool! what does he drink for? don't he know better than to torture that girl to death? and she supporting him in his laziness? It's too bad!"

Guilford was silent, as he thought of the gospel word, that man was as guilty in breaking one command as though he transgressed in all. He passed along, however, intending to go to his room, when Austin called him.

"Come and sit down here," he said; "there is no noise; people get beat out here, on Sun-

day, and go to bed early. I want to talk to you—or rather, I want you to talk with me."

"Willingly," said Guilford, seating himself; "what shall I talk about?"

"Well," Austin hesitated, "it's been on my mind to ask you, more than once, how you got in this state; how you experienced this change, I believe you call it."

"I will tell you," said Guilford, with a joyful bound at his heart; "I will most gladly tell you. In the first, place I was once an infidel, and very nearly a deist. I had a circle of friends, who had led me to think as they did. There were eight of us, who had banished the Word from our homes and hearts—seven of them energetic, sturdy, robust men, made in the image of the Creator. From sceptical readings, we each one of us fell in with free-thinking associates, and the result was a combination of intellect, means and tastes, by which we hoped to make our way and our fortunes in the world.

"We were all young men, the oldest not

yet twenty-four, and we decided, at one of our meetings, to form a union with some others, who agreed with us in principles, and who were in the main, too selfish to think of anything outside of their own wants and desires, to set off for the West, where we might found a town, and raise a city in the midst of the wilderness. People from every part of the Eastern States, but more particularly from New England, were then emigrating in great numbers, carrying with them, as we sneeringly said, their old religious prejudices and fanatical notions, to raise a fresh crop in the new homes of the West.

"I was the youngest of the company, a boy of nineteen; thrown an orphan on the world before I was five years old. I had been saved from utter moral destruction, only by the merciful providence of God. The oldest, the noblest, and the most of a man among us, was Watson Knowles. His *physique* was the most splendid that I ever beheld. A broad, decided brow; eyes deep, gray, and lustrous

with a certain cheerful benignity, a cheek ruddy with health, an intellect as commanding as his stature was imposing, made him a very handsome man. In all things, Watson Knowles was tacitly permitted to take the lead. He had become an infidel by reading the works of Tom Paine, while yet very youthful, and before reason had matured his judgment, yet I never met a man who was his equal in debate. He was gifted with singular powers of attraction. All his coworkers loved him; I perhaps better than the rest, for he had been more like a father to me than a friend. He was strictly moral. I never heard an oath from his lips; I never saw him use the mildest of stimulants; I never heard him speak in hot anger: he observed the outward forms of goodness, and his disposition was peculiarly mild and affectionate. The prominent display of such traits gave him an immense influence over those who were in anyway subordinate to him, and that was every one who came within his sphere.

With another man, Willoughby, by name, Watson Knowles went out to survey the promised land, and wrote back such glowing accounts, that we were all fain to start by the time winter had fairly broken up. The land was rich, he said, and he had chosen his place forty miles from any other settlement, where wood and water abounded. We should have the best claim of any he had yet seen, and before many months our colony would surpass all the other towns along the river.

It was in the month of March, we started, and in May we gathered together a strong party. We labored hard on six days, the seventh, which we regarded as a mere play-day, we devoted to amusements and idle rest. Bathing, swimming, fishing, and even dancing, composed the sports of those holy hours. We built a rude hall, where sometimes Watson Knowles and others gave lectures on scientific and literary subjects. There were plenty of good musicians in our own little company, and our Sabbaths were as merry as

a worldly heart could wish. Of course we gathered in emigrants, as we were often obliged to confess, not exactly of the right sort. They were lazy, improvident persons, with villainous, hang-dog-faces, and nervous hands, that seemed forever shuffling imaginary cards. In fine, we had not a few gamblers and blacklegs among us, who kept us in continual fear, but who enjoyed our games and freedom from religious restriction, mightily. None shouted as loudly as they, in the sports; none sang wilder songs or danced with less weariness, but as for work, the less they did of that, the better.

It soon became evident that things did not go prosperously with us. It was very strange; we had all we wanted, we were happy; people of some sort were joining us from time to time, but in fact the real homes of our prophesy did not rise, neither did the smoke curl up from peaceful chimneys. There were secret ginshops, which Watson, with all his vigilance, and lecturing could not suppress. There were

lapses from virtue of the most aggravating character. The children strolled like very vagabonds, and shirked the schools that were provided for them; farms were neglected, and altogether the prospect grew discouraging, even to such sanguine natures as ours. Only on the Sabbath did the people show any vitality. Then they came out in their best, ready for the lecture, the river, the dance, the fight, it mattered little which, provided they had a taste of each during the twelve hours sunlight.

"I don't see how it is," Watson used to say, after any unusual wickedness had taken place, to me, his friend and confidant, "I don't see how it is;" and he spoke in a discouraged way, "I've tried my best to make things right here, but they grow worse and worse every week. I'm ashamed of the whole concern."

It was proposed among us that Watson should make a trip to some of the other settlements and stay a while. There was one to the right and one to the left in a most flourishing

condition. It was a good idea, Watson said, and before the week was ended, he went. During his absence, the confusion grew unparalleled. Boats were stolen, a German was stabbed, a woman beaten nearly to death, and a hut set on fire. Depredations on fruit had been committed by the children, who acted more like fiends incarnate than human beings, most of them being foreigners of the lowest grade. By the time Watson returned, the heads of the colony had become generally dissatisfied, and were unwilling to continue in a position so hemmed about with responsibilities which they found themselves unable to meet.

"We were all anxious to hear the result of our friend's investigation, you may well believe, and our first query was, "what have you learned?"

"Boys," said he, "I've visited two settlements, and become convinced of one thing; we shall go to the dogs if we don't make some show of religious teaching here. They are

getting along famously down the river and up, too: churches in both places; and the people do all their work and play, between the Sundays, so they told me. What do you think! they have actually built a meeting-house down the river, and it's full every Sabbath. One of the people there, told me they wouldn't live in safety, if it wasn't for the Sunday School; and they have got along so well, that they pay a tolerable salary for a good preacher. Boys, it's no use—for the sake of the public, we must get up a Sunday School."

It seemed an odd proposition to all of us. What had come over our leader? A Sunday School! There were murmurs of disapprobation; still no one felt inclined to dispute with him, only one and another alluded to the fact that we had no Bibles.

"He said he knew that, and had purchased a few at the settlement. "I don't know as they will harm us," he added with a faint laugh. How well I remember that day!

Then he arose; said he was going to give notice that there would be a Sabbath School on the next day, in the dance-house; that he thought little by little we could cut off the gambling and boating.

"No words can explain the state of our minds then; mine was in a perfect tumult, and I could not think with any coherence. My friend seemed changed, yet in what manner I could not tell; there was something in his eye, something in the very tones of his voice, that went to my heart.

"The morrow dawned, and out of absolute curiosity, I believe, there were nearly a hundred people present, parents and children. We eight infidels, were confounded and uneasy. I had never been to a Sabbath School in my life, and knew not what was expected of me.

"They always open with prayer," whispered some one, "who of us can pray!"

"At least, I know the Lord's prayer," said Watson; "I learned it at my mother's knee,"

he added with a strange and tender solemnity. "Boys, I'll lead, but by next Sabbath, one of you must learn something." So saying he mounted the little platform, and folded his hands. The position was a novel one to him, as the sight was to us. He was about to address that great God, of whom he professed, no mortal might inquire; who was too lofty, too entirely above man's comprehension, too much absorbed in his mighty plans to notice the creatures who crawled upon his footstool. His face, even to his very lips grew white, and his voice trembled in a way we had never thought possible with him. I don't think one of us smiled. For myself, I was awe-struck, smitten with a nameless dread, and only thinking how much it ennobled that princely-looking man to stand erect before the presence of the Most High, in the attitude of supplication.

"When he had prayed, he opened the Bible. His hands shook as if they would drop the sacred volume—I involuntarily step-

ped forward. He placed the book in my hands, whispering,

"I believe I am not well; I will go home, and return soon, if I get better. Do you read."

"I began to read with assurance, too ignorantly assumed. Unwittingly, I had opened at John 1: 3, and as I read, the words imbued with a new and wonderful light, sank into my soul. These, with the impression of my friend's last expression, together with the remembrance of his appearance, affected me so, that I soon wavered, and my voice was drowned in tears. Another and another essayed to read, and finally, one of the eight accomplished the chapter. The people seemed affected at a sight so unwonted. Some of them remembered the religious ceremonies of Father-land; others thought of the tree-embowered New England Churches, in the sweet villages they had left; still others felt the pressure of a mother's hand upon their heads, and seemed to hear the holy prayer

sent heavenward. At last, one weather-beaten man, whose voice and countenance betrayed his intense emotion, confessed the waywardness of years and his resolve to lead a better life. Then came two others, and that meeting ended in a storm of prayer. God appeared in the midst of that strange congregation. Men and women sang for joy. I left them, terribly shaken in all my doubts and hurried to my friend. I found him ill and helpless; he did not know me. Prone upon his humble pallet, lay that grand figure; the hair tossed from the feverish brow; the clenched hands uplifted, as he called on God to save, to be merciful to him. Day after day, night after night, we watched him, through that fearful illness; that fever of the brain.

"At last, one beautiful morning, it was the Sabbath, he seemed rational again. Recognizing me the first, he cried piteously, 'Oh, Guilford, forgive me, boy, I have taught you wrongly,' then with uplifted eyes and

hands he said, 'there *is* a Jesus Christ. Go to him, plead for one who has resisted him so long. I am dying, Guilford, and I want you to tell them in the Sabbath School that with my last breath I proclaimed that there *was* a Christ; that though poor, miserable and sinful I found myself, I depended on him for salvation.'

"Austin, my friend," and Guilford's voice fell low, "it *was* his *last breath*. He smiled, and then he slept, as I trust, in that Jesus he had despised. I trust, I *know* he had gone for pardon to Him who will in no wise cast out the penitent.

"Oh! as I looked at him then, that noble countenance bereft of life, yet taking on a halo of the brightness which encircled him now, my soul cried out in its anguish for something to lean upon. Words cannot tell how utterly alone, how entirely helpless I felt!

"Ah! that death was as the seed of life. Over that new-made grave we (alas! now but

seven) renounced our infidelity. It is but a few years ago. I can seem to see that mound of freshly-heaped earth, the coffin, the bright, beautiful face, so placidly calm in death. I see the aged minister whom we had called to pray for us, feel the clasping of his hands, the pressure of each other's hands when the coffin was lowered.

"We called the Sabbath School after his name. God blessed us. The holy day became an honor and a glory in our midst. Quietly the population subsided into habits of thrift and steadiness. Farms smiled, business increased, churches sprung up, until when I left we could count a colony of eight thousand, and the white spires of five churches pointed the way to eternal life."

A slight sob might have been heard at the conclusion of this affecting story. Hager sat back in the darkness of the unlighted room near where Guilford was; she had heard much of it, for she stole out of the glare of the kitchen where two or three young men were smoking

and talking, to escape by herself to think. Austin had listened quietly at first, but by and by his manner grew nervous, he flung his half smoked cigar away, and folding his arms, sat back, his tightly closed lips indicating much and deep feeling. He did not resume his former lightness of manner at the close, he was silent instead, and his face wore an expression of the utmost seriousness.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT THE COLONEL THOUGHT OF THE SABBATH.

IN the morning, Guilford felt it his duty to call upon the poor family in whom he had become interested the night before. Sarah met him on the threshold.

"How is your father?" asked Guilford.

"Better, sir, but very weak. O! I am thankful you came—that you said just what you did. It has saved him, I hope. He had three paroxysms during the night—terrible ones, but he held on to the Bible, and seemed to think that would protect him. I trust you do not think we have such scenes often," she added, tears filling her eyes; "it is the first time it has served him this way. Will you go in, sir? he has repeatedly asked for you."

Guilford assented, and they entered the room. The scattered furniture, which in his raving, the maniac had thrown about, was now restored to order, and on a deep lounge, that had felt the violence of his ravings, the drunkard lay, pale, wearied out, his trembling hands still folded over the volume that had not been out of his grasp.

"O! sir," he said, not trying to check the tears that began to stream down his pallid cheeks, "I have been in hell."

"That is a sad experience," said Guilford, gravely, taking a seat by his bedside.

"Sad!" exclaimed the man, with a look of horror, "yes, and you have used the right word *experience*, not imagination. No one need tell me that the sights I saw, and the sounds I heard, were the distortions of a perverted fancy. I did hear; I did see. I have had drunkards and drunkard-makers round me, yelling, dancing and singing infernal music. It rings in my ears now. O! how they seemed to gloat over me! O! how they

clutched at me! and one of the fiercest, whispered that they had come before the time. O! sir, you are a Christian; my daughter, that blessed child, tells me so; do you see anything in me worth saving? Can I be saved from this appetite?"

He lifted himself, and with ghastly eyes fastened upon Guilford's face, awaited an answer.

"Yes, you can be saved: because first, there is power in Christ to save you, and secondly there is power in you to seek salvation, and to keep the wondrous gift, forever, with the help of Christ. This Guilford enunciated slowly, his glance never once moved from the yearning look of the drunkard.

"There is something in your face, that comforts me," said the troubled sinner, falling back again; "something that goes to my heart, and gives a warmth that I lost ages ago. O! sir, you do not know me—I have transgressed against light and mercy so long!"

"And Christ has had patience with you for so long, I should think it would lead you to Him now. What a mercy you did not die in that dreadful delirium! I think you could not survive another."

"Do you, do you, indeed?" asked the man earnestly, sweeping back the silvery locks that fell over his forehead; "oh! how shall I save myself! That fearful appetite!"

"Can you keep a promise?" queried Guilford. "Pardon me for putting the question so bluntly; I know how the demon appetite paralyses all good—every effort of the strongest will."

"Yes, yes, that's it," said the man, in a hopeless voice; "but I think, I trust there is man enough of me left to keep a promise. I don't know, though; how often have I attempted it?" a tremulous sigh closed the sentence.

"Do you keep strong drink of any kind in the house?"

Sarah blushed crimson, and turned away.

Poor child! to hold him to her home, she had purchased the fiery liquor, which he was in the habit of taking daily.

"I always keep it," said the man, in a low voice.

"Give it up, sir, or there's no help for you. It would be useless for you to pray, to call on Christ for mercy, while you sheltered satan in your very heart. Throw the vile stuff far from you. Resolve, in the strength of God, that from this hour nothing of the kind shall pass your lips. Surround yourself with triple guards; be even a prisoner in your own house, before you encourage the demands of that fearful appetite. Why, sir, in coming here this morning, I thought what a beautiful place might this be! Here is land before your door, quite neglected. Here is a field on one side of your house, an orchard on the other. With proper care you might be a king over that soil, a bounteous king, giving but to be blest; enriching but to have wealth ten fold returned to you. Think how the flowers

would smile in your face, giving you mute blessings for their existence? Beautiful flowers! only the clear water from heaven is their drink. O! my dear sir, I plead with you as I would with my own father—come out from the region of darkness into the land of light. You are in prison, shut in the iron walls of sin. Without is the sunshine of God's peace, the fruits of his blessings; the arch of heaven, where you and I may meet hereafter—bloom and beauty, and fragrance on all sides. Come out; God did not give you life that it should see no Paradise in this world, poor as it is. Come, my dear sir, stand up and say, 'I, too, am a man—a conqueror.'"

"I will, God helping me," said the drunkard, solemnly. "O! sir, I have seen it all, as you talked; my jail, this corrupt heart; my jailer, the monster who putteth the bottle to his neighbor's lips. His business is to destroy, to cut off hope; to deform God's handiwork, to change the human heart to a devil; to desolate homes; to curse God to his face;

to make earth like hell; to starve babes; to fill church-yards; to breed riots; to feed jealousy; to corrupt every honest impulse, to blight every good resolve; to teach mankind to be thieves and robbers, adulterers and murderers; and to glut the jails and prisons. Does *he* dare hope for mercy?"

The man had risen again; every line in his face quivered; his eyes flashed; his lips trembled; it was as the tempted accusing the tempter.

"Father, dear father—you must not get excited again."

"No, daughter—no, darling; oh! if I only thought I should ever be a father to you once more; but, Sarah—give me your hand, my child; I promise you, I will try."

"In the strength of God," whispered Guilford.

"Yes. In the strength of God," repeated the old man; "pray for me, pray for me, sir. O! I have reason to bless you for coming here to me."

And Guilford did pray; with all the fervor of his soul, he sent his petition up to God, who heareth.

"Let me tell you, sir," said the old man, clinging to his hand, before he went: "you are the only living being I ever promised. To myself, I have done so many a time; oh! sir, I will try, indeed I will; I will ask God to help me. You don't know how I long to be a better man."

Guilford listened with pleasure; spoke words of Christian sympathy, and set out on his way to the mill, after promising to send some one to remain with the sick man—for sick he really was, with the reaction of his system, after so many, and fierce struggles.

Colonel Leffingwell was riding up to the mills, as Guilford reached the door of his office.

"Good morning," sir," said the bluff man, heartily.

"Good morning," responded Guilford, modestly touching his hat.

"Splendid day, isn't it?"

"God has given us a glorious day, sir."

The Colonel cleared his throat ostentatiously, before he said, "and yesterday was delightful—for—for worshipping God, in the great temples He has made," and the Colonel waved his gloved hand and his riding whip over toward the groves beyond them.

"Yes, sir," replied Guilford," all places are consecrated where we worship the Deity."

"I suppose you would hardly agree with us, sir," said the Colonel, with another loud ahem; "we spent our day in those pleasant aisles. It carries the thoughts up, sir, to be surrounded by nature's beauties; for my part, give me the peace and quiet of the woods. Did you attend church, sir?"

"I did," responded Guilford; "in the next village."

"I had half a mind to send for you, to join us," said the Colonel, "but, perhaps, it would not have accorded with your notions."

"Frankly, it would not," returned Guilford smiling.

"You prefer to swelter in a meeting-house; eh?"

"I prefer to go up to the sanctuary," said Guilford, "where the soul is divested of all distracting outward surroundings, and where His people pray, and sing to His praise. I love it, sir; my heart is bound up in the welfare of Christ's Zion."

"O! I perceive you are rather on the fanatical order," said the Colonel, lightly. "Now *I* see God in everything," he added, elevating his handsome chin," and I do not feel that I am in the wrong for wishing to choose *my* way of worshipping God."

"If we worship Him in spirit, and in truth, Colonel Leffingwell, we need not fear but we shall be accepted," said Guilford, quietly. "I felt, however, as if I saw, some yesterday, towards the close of the day, who had been more intent upon their own pleasure than any Christian service. I allude to those who went fishing, and some others who appeared to be intoxicated."

The cheek of the Colonel flushed.

"That was wrong, of course; there will be some unruly members in a community like this; it was very wrong—very disgraceful. You must help us to put matters right, Mr. Coit."

"Indeed I will," Guilford replied earnestly, his eye brightening; "but, sir, is there really any necessity for keeping a bar-room in this small village? I am very sorry to be under the obligation of remaining where death and destruction are liberally dealt out. I do believe, Colonel, that the landlord of our tavern could be induced to give it up; he seems a reasonable kind of man."

The Colonel's cheek had flushed with a deeper, broader crimson.

"I don't know; I don't know," he said hurriedly; "the dickens take his religion," he muttered to himself.

"It is doing great harm, sir, depend upon it," said Guilford, gravely; feeling deeply the importance of the matter, and forgetting for a

moment, that the Colonel was by far the largest sharer in the profits of the concern; "we are, and must be, in this world, the keepers of our brothers, guarding the weak and guiding the wayward."

"Yes—yes," muttered the Colonel vaguely, then starting, as if he had forgotten something, he said,

"O! by the way—we are to have a little company up at Rose-Hedge on Tuesday night. There will be no dancing, so I suppose your peculiar views," he emphasied these two words, "will hardly prevent you from joining us."

"I shall be very happy to come, sir," said Guilford, and the two went on their way.

Meantime Sarah Church had entered the mills, and quietly taken her place by the side of little Hager. Save the pallor of her cheeks, there was no token given that she had suffered. Her heart was full of gratitude to God, that He had sent her timely aid, in her great need. She was not wont to pray, but on that

sad Sabbath, she had fallen on her knees before God, crying out for help, only the moment before she met Guilford Coit. It seemed like a wondrous miracle-answer. The good old Goldby was now at home with her father, and her heart felt lighter and happier than it had for years. She was like one long lost in a cave, who sees afar off, a ray of light, that speaks of liberty and life.

Hager's rose-bud face was unusually thoughtful, and the dimples seldomer seen. Intent upon her work the child seemed, and there was a shade of thought in the hitherto laughing blue eyes. All at once, after a long silence, she spoke out, "What a nice place our great hall would be?"

Sarah paused, and looked at her.

"What were you saying, Hager?" she asked.

"O!" the child blushed, "why I was thinking—and I suppose I thought out loud," she replied.

"You must have been very much in earnest," responded Sarah.

"So you would be, if you could hear Mr. Coit talk," said Hager earnestly.

"Yes, indeed—yes, indeed," Sarah answered, in a lower voice; "I believe in *his* religion."

"I guess you would, if you could see him all the time," said Hager; she looked up seriously—awe and wonder in her gentle eyes, as she added, "I don't believe he ever does anything wrong, and oh! he's so patient!"

"Patient, with whom?"

"Why, sometimes the men at the house sneer and laugh at him, and ask him hard questions, and say things that would make *me* angry; but he is just as quiet and pleasant; and as I said, takes pains to answer and put them right, in such a patient way! It almost makes me cry," and the tears brimmed up to her eyes.

Just then, a merry thoughtless girl was passing.

"Who has seen saint Coit, this morning?" she cried, lightly.

"You see how they make sport of him," murmured Hager, grievingly.

"It doesn't hurt him any dear," was Sarah's reply, while she heard the loud laugh going the rounds, as one girl after another took up the jest; "but tell me what you meant about the hall?"

"Only—I heard him talking about a Sabbath-school; and I thought if father said yes, you know, we might manage to pick up a few scholars, who were willing to go. Mr. Hanfort is a religious man; he belongs to the church, and always goes once on Sunday, to the old village; maybe he would help, and Mr. Coit would be so glad! because, you see, it might lead the way for meetings here, and I shouldn't wonder if he could preach as well as anybody."

"Why, dear, you're laying plans for turning us all topsy turvy—," said Sarah, smiling; "but, nevertheless, I suppose your idea is to have Sunday-school at the tavern. I'm afraid it'll be a long time before that happens.

Mr. Hanfort is a church member, I know, but for all that his children go boating on the Sabbath; and they are not going to give up their sport in a hurry."

The laugh had not yet died out: still Guilford was the subject of sneering remark.

"He's an odd copy of the canticles," cried one black-eyed girl, whose hair was showily dressed off with red ribbons. "Above all things, I *do* hate your parading Christians always making a fuss about their sentiments and attempting to teach their betters. I'll let him see he can't talk to me in a hurry."

"O! Sarah," cried Hager in a low voice, "there he is right behind her, and he must have heard! O! it's too bad," and the crimson of mortification mounted to her cheek. Just then, the girl heard his voice. Bold as she was, her eyes fell, and her face grew scarlet. In another moment he stood quietly beside her.

"Have you hurt your hand?" he asked, seeing that her left hand was bound up.

"I lamed it, yesterday," was the short reply.

"Be careful how you use it to-day, then," he said, and passed on. The girl with the red ribbons, bit her lips, then curled them, then tossed her head, but how was it? The real malice she had felt was all gone, and in its stead had come shame of self. She knew he had heard her unkind remark: had heard the light speeches on all sides, and yet how calm, unmoved and gentle he looked, still taking no notice.

Guilford paused a moment by Sarah Church, and smiled toward Hager. He had seen for some time, that in her young heart the truth was working. He knew it by a thousand little signs; he trusted much in her influence with her father, for his plans were dimly forming. He saw a little cloud in the heavens. What did it matter that it was but a spark on the horizon? God was able to enlarge it.

"Prayer," he murmured to himself, walking on, "fervent, unceasing prayer, will do the work."

CHAPTER X.

THE FASHIONABLE PARTY.

COLONEL LEFFINGWELL'S house was always full of company. His wife was an invalid, and fancied she required the stimulus of perpetual excitement. She was a fair, small woman, always resting in easy chairs, luxuriously attired, or lying on lounges attended by a delicate little girl who was her own especial maid.

Mrs. Leffingwell was either extremely languid, or excessively irritable. Denied the pleasures to which she had always been accustomed, till within a few years, she had no resources save to revel in the remembrance of the past, and to dwell with pertinacious small talk upon the glories she had seen, the marvels she had met with. Her mind had been systematically narrowed down by the

routine of fashionable life. From the nursery she had emerged a wonder of conventionality; to the first day of her long and tedious illness, she had been the leader of a clique, the glass of fashion and the mould of form.

Maud Mary, her only daughter, had escaped much of the drilling that had perfected her mother. Consequently she was truer to nature, and having been always the companion of her father and brother, her mind had taken in an out-door strength, that gave it a certain vigor, denied to hot-house plants.

To her mother, she seemed immature and unlady-like.

"I have been sick ever since she was nine years old," she would say apologetically; "and consequently have been able to devote very little time to the formation of her habits. She's perfectly rude: quite a barbarian. Nelly, child, hand me my vinegarette," and easy overcome by the perverse picture her child presented, as drawn by herself, she

would snuff at the bottle till its pungency drew tears that were carefully wiped away with the finest and flossiest of handkerchiefs. There never was a more fashionable invalid than Mrs. Lydia Leffingwell. As she pathetically observed to a friend, it took all her time to invent new styles; "where one can possibly do nothing," she added, "you know it is such a comfort to keep one's self well dressed."

Merric inherited his mother's constitution, (the family on her side was consumptive) but he was a bright, merry, happy creature; and when she was confined to her sick chamber, during the severer trials of her disease, he was her sunshine. She idolized him; indeed, he took the place of God in her poor heart.

As usual, the house was bright with music, flowers and laughter. Several city friends had come to revel in the beautiful conservatories which were the Colonel's special pride, and to eat the choice fruits which were cultivated by Harvey, one of the most skilful of English gardeners.

"We must have plenty of flowers to-night," said Mary, as she entered the wide hall, arm and arm with a friend.

"O! yes, in honor of your new, and I should judge, immaculate agent," replied the other laughing. "Did you know his mighty highness undertook to tell your father, that he and all of us did unpardonably wrong in going in the woods last Sunday to eat sandwiches and hear the birds sing, instead of tramping to the meeting-house, seven or eight miles off?"

"No," replied Mary; "but I consider it very impertinent if he did so."

"Mary!" called her mother from an adjoining room, "I believe my troubles will kill me yet," she cried fretfully, as the young girl entered. "See, the careless things have scorched one of my best handkerchiefs, and the lace and ribbons of my new cap, are not fit to be seen, the way it was put in the box! It's enough to make one cry with vexation," she added. "And to see you with such vulgar red cheeks; oh! Mary, Mary! you will never make a lady—I despair!"

"What shall I do for you, mother?" asked Mary, quietly.

"Do for me—I don't know as anything can be done to suit me. Straighten out those ribbons if the thing is possible. I'm so worried and fretted, that I don't believe I shall be able to be seen to-night, and I so doated on wearing that lilac silk."

"Trifles to the well, are burdens to the sick," thought Mary, stifling an impatient sigh, but she could not help mentally repeating, "and what trifles!"

"The Colonel says he has invited that low fellow, the new agent," worried Mrs. Leffingwell, sinking down on the couch-pillows, and adjusting the fine ruffles on her sleeves.

"Low—oh! no, mamma; the very farthest from that—he is a gentleman, if deportment and real courtesy make one," replied Mary.

"But all these religious folks who believe in noisy meetings, and going all lengths in what they call serving God, are generally

very common people indeed," persisted Mrs. Leffingwell, annoyed that her daughter gainsaid her. "He may put on the airs of a gentleman, but depend upon it, if I feel equal to the exertion, I shall soon make him appear very ignorant and silly. I like to expose all such pretence, and I despise ranters. If people have religion, they should never force its notice obtrusively on other people; I hate that. Now, I consider Mr. Hanfort a reasonable Christian; he don't carry his views too far. Said he to me, the other night, when I felt equal to a game of whist, 'I'm not a fanatic, madam; I believe in reasonable enjoyment. It is excess in these things that makes them sinful.' Now, such a man as that, I can have patience with; but your religious exclusives—oh! dear!" and her hand was outstretched for the smelling bottle.

"Mr. Hanfort's children do not show an excess of religious training," said Mary, rather to herself.

"O! well, he is unfortunate, to be sure, in

having a dissipated son and three wild daughters; but there is many a minister of the gospel who has the same trial. I don't think the poor man is to blame, because his children go wrong. I'm sure it's only natural goodness, that has kept you and Merric; for what have I been able to do towards your bringing up."

Mary smiled, involuntarily, as she glanced towards the little lump of silk and muslin, but her heart instantly rebuked her, and bending down she kissed her mother's pale brow, feeling that perhaps she had not long to live, and that best of all earthly names was very sweet to her.

The time wore on, and by seven the invalid was dressed for the evening, and wheeled to a conspicuous place near the great chandelier. The grand piano was opened to its utmost extent, lights flashed from room to room, card-tables were spread with their soft green baize covers, and very soon the company began to come. Of course the *elite* of

Clifton Locks were there, and Guilford had an opportunity to see society in its best phase. He did not come till most of the guests had arrived, and his appearance caused quite a buzz, subdued though it was. His light had not been hid under a bushel consequently as it was neither feeble nor dim, it had been seen far and near, and people took the liberty of saying what they pleased about it. Some had heard that he was a coarse, eccentric religionist, who cared not in what he offended; others that he was plausible, handsome and eloquent, but a man to be feared, for so many such were hypocrites! All however appeared pleased with his gentlemanly exterior as he entered the room arm in arm with Austin Grande. Introductions took place, and when these formalities were over, Guilford Coit had leisure to look about him, and study human nature.

Mary Leffingwell appeared to have entrenched herself behind a haughty reserve, but Merric, the boy with those tender and beautiful eyes that seemed made for heaven, chatted in

his frank, pleasant way with the new agent; talked about mill-improvements, the country, the society, and gave him a sketchy history of some of the notabilities present. In the midst of this, Guilford was summoned to the side of the lady of the house. She received him with languid affability, and motioned him to a seat next to her.

"You see I am a poor invalid," she said, smiling, "but I contrive to make the world contribute to my enjoyment."

Guilford bowed politely, his eyes scanned the white fleshless arms, the thin blue neck, all flashing with jewels, all adorned with lace, and he could say nothing.

"How do you like our town, Mr. Coit?" asked Mrs. Leffingwell.

"So far as I have seen and enjoyed its natural beauties, I think it a superior place, madam," he replied.

"Yes, we have a few very aristocratic persons here, very much refined, though not so fashionable of course, as the circles one meets

in the city, but still they are pleasant, sociable people."

She was drifting beyond his tide; position was nothing to him, salvation everything.

"Have you ever been to Europe?" she asked, languidly.

"I have enjoyed that pleasure," was his reply.

"You have!" the lady opened her eyes to their widest extent, and lifted herself a little from the luxurious arm-chair. She was not prepared for this answer. Guilford smiled as he thought, "she will fall again presently."

"Pray when did you go?" she asked.

"Many years past, madam; I went as a sailor before the mast."

"O!" she sank back again, weary, but placid, and evidently disinclined for further talk. Then he would have risen, but she exclaimed, "don't go, sir, will you not join me in a game of whist? Merric, my love, draw the table up and take out the cards."

Guilford started as if he had been stung;

his brow reddened, but he said resolutely and quietly,

"Pardon me, madam, I do not play."

"O! then you don't know the game," she said, looking curiously towards him, "you don't know the game," she repeated sharply.

"Yes, madam, I *do* know the game; I am —I am sorry to say, thoroughly acquainted with cards."

By this time a little circle had gathered, apparently by accident, but really to witness, as they thought, his discomfiture.

"What, do you mean me to infer that it is wicked to play an innocent game of cards?" queried Mrs. Leffingwell, the color tinging her sallow cheeks.

"I cannot call that innocent which is a snare to the soul; which has destroyed its tens and hundreds of thousands," he replied still with that shuddering look. "For me to play would be only short of absolute madness, for I have seen those cards reddened with blood. I have seen the gamester throw one despairing glance

to heaven, and then pull the pistol-trigger at his brains."

"O! you shouldn't tell such horrible stories," said Mrs. Leffingwell.

"I wished you to know in what light I viewed card-playing," replied the young man. "In my humble judgment, no Christian will touch cards for any purpose of amusement."

"Then you wouldn't even touch them," said Merric, who had unconsciously dropped the pack he held, on the table-cover.

"O, yes I would, for one purpose," replied Guilford, smiling.

"And pray what would that be?"

"To put them in the fire," replied the young man.

"Mr. Hanfort," said Mrs. Leffingwell appealingly, "here's a young man who says a Christian ought not to touch a card; what do you think of that!"

"With one exception, I believe I stated," said Guilford, as the portly gentleman drew nearer the invalid's chair.

"O! that wasn't polite," said Mrs. Leffingwell, with the utmost serenity, "and I will not repeat it."

"Very well, madam," said Guilford, feeling the retort, yet not betraying that he did so. Mr. Hanfort now approached. His manner betrayed uneasiness, for he was a time-server and he hesitated a moment.

"Every one has a right to his opinion," at last he said, with a courteous bow. "Mr. Coit might possibly think that no Christian should eat meat, and I might differ from him as I most assuredly do on this question. I never thought it a sin to pass a quiet hour at cards, especially," and he bowed on the other side, "if invited to play by a lady."

There was a little murmur of approbation; Guilford felt his unpopularity, but it did not trouble him; he was still valiant for the right.

"Well, I like a man to show his colors, any way," said Merric bluntly.

"My son!" exclaimed his mother reprovingly.

"I am on Merric's side," said Mary Leffingwell to her friend in a low voice. "I can't say I much admire Mr. Coit; he seems to be such an old young man, but I do admire his consistency. I don't believe Christians ought to play cards."

Thereupon arose a little discussion, while as Mr. Hanfort dealt the cards, Guilford, who had risen, stood looking with a strangely searching, troubled glance into his face. Suddenly he drew a long breath, went towards the card-playing Christian, touched his hand as he bent down, saying "pardon me, sir, your face suggested a strong likeness. Did you ever know or hear of one Jack Hanfort, a sailor before the mast?"

"Did I know him?" a pallor crept from brow to chin as the man turned, the tips of his fingers contracting over the cards. Did *you* know him?"

"Yes, sir, I did," replied Guilford, a strange look in his eyes.

"And where did you see him last?" still

queried the Christian player, as the cards fell one by one, sliding gently on to the table from his now nerveless fingers.

"At the card-table," whispered Guilford.

Mr. Hanfort had risen, and seizing the young man's hand with a terrible grasp, he said, "let us go by ourselves," and without a word of apology, he left the invalid's chair.

"I shall begin to think, as Mr. Grande says, that he charms every body," said Mary Leffingwell; "there is that very liberal professor going off with him. Really it was rather rude in him to leave mamma so; we must find somebody to play whist with her."

Nearly half an hour elapsed and Mr. Hanfort was still absent. Presently Guilford came in alone, very pale. Austin Grande, who had volunteered to play was not quite through with the game, but Mrs. Leffingwell pleaded indisposition, and he retired.

"Guilford," he said, meeting him, "why how white you look, man! Did you find out who that Jack really was? What! his son?

And it was he who blew his brains out? Horrible! horrible! what a lesson! Where is Mr. Hanfort?"

"Gone home," said Guilford.

"I wouldn't let it get round, Mrs. Leffingwell is such an invalid. How dull it has been!"

"I have thrown the shadow I'm afraid; people look at me as if I had," said Guilford.

"You have thrown a shadow deep enough over one man," said Austin, "but then it was not your fault."

"No, he would hear all," said Guilford, shudderingly; the two were alone; they had unconsciously walked along towards the conservatory. "I think I never heard such miserable self-upbraiding. Austin, I believe I would rather be a thorough out and out unbeliever, than a half-way Christian, professing to have come from the the world and yet tampering with its forbidden pleasures. That man may blame himself for the ruin of his boy; I understand he was an only son."

"Yes, he was," replied Austin.

"Poor man, he smote his breast, with the wild cry, 'God be merciful!' I did not know as he led me on, that it was of his own son I was telling. It occurred to me some time before that possibly it was a nephew or a cousin, and when I came to that last scene at the card-table, I feared for a moment he would die. He gasped, and his eyes stood out with the violence of his labor for breath.

"Sir," said he, after a few moments of awful agony; "that was my only boy. I had given him up, long ago, as lost—irretrievably, if not dead; but you have opened the wound afresh. O! my son, my son!"

A moment after he lifted his head, his face had changed, his lips were quivering.

"I thank you for that rebuke," he said, "accursed cards! never shall my hands be polluted with their touch; oh! accursed cards! O! I have killed my boy! my boy!"

"Well, you may truly say, I am white, after such an ordeal as that. I pitied that

man as I think I never pitied a human being before. I could not comfort him, for I felt as he did, that he had but himself to blame for the misconduct of his child. I say I could not comfort him. I tried to lead him to the Lord Jesus, and I hope I succeeded in calling his mind somewhat from his distracting sorrow. It would have been a lesson for wordly professors," he added, shaking his head; "I shall never forget it."

"Hark! They are singing," said Austin, a few moments after.

"Perhaps you had better return," said Guilford. I prefer solitude just now, and this dim light suits me."

Austin left him. The sad story he had just heard made him unhappy; he wanted light, mirth, music to dissipate the remembrance. He went into the lighted rooms, where he met the Colonel, who had just come in.

"Good evening, sir, good evening!" said the Colonel, heartily; "well, has our pious chaplain come? how does he get along?"

"O! father, he's been giving us such lectures," said Mary, who overheard the question. "I really didn't know for the moment, but he would turn the party into a prayer-meeting."

"Ah! did he begin that way? Why he's a rough cub, isn't he? He might at least have waited till some one gave him leave to introduce his piosities, I think."

"He's a right down good fellow, father," said Merric, joining in warmly. "I like him, because he shows just what he is, and isn't ashamed of his religion. It isn't so with Mr. Hanfort, and some others I could mention. They seem to go about with their heads down crying out, 'oh? do please excuse me, for being a professor of religion. I ain't very strict. I can still indulge in a few little trifling sins. I won't intrude my sentiments if you'll only tolerate me; not at all. I'll put on as world-sleek a face as any of you; you shan't know the difference, upon my word!' Pretty Christians they are!"

"Well done, Merric, you'll come out a good

theologian, yourself, by-and-by," said his father, joining in the laugh.

An hour after the Colonel saw his agent in conversation with his wife. He sighed just a little as he thought of her delicate health, and wondered if some of that cant the young dog had, would enable his poor, weak wife, to control the petty unamiability that sometimes made the whole household unhappy.

"But I don't see why you make such broad distinctions," Mrs. Leffingwell was saying, as she pulled nervously at the pendants of a bracelet that hung loosely on her shrunken wrist.

"For the best reason in the world," said the young man, gently; and the Colonel was struck with the sweet peace and serenity of the countenance he was watching. "Christ has said, 'Come ye out from among them—be ye separate.'"

"Yes, but if you condemn all these things, dancing among them, what would our young ladies do for exercise," queried Mrs. Leffingwell, impatiently.

Guilford smiled involuntarily; so did the Colonel; perhaps the same thought occurred to both, that the weakest and most fastidious lady-invalids, whose health would not admit of the least unrefined exercise, who would faint, at the sight of a broom-handle, or blush if thought capable of carrying a bundle ten rods, were not too sickly or too delicate to sit up night after night, dancing, till the small hours, eating ices, being whirled about, drinking wines, standing in draughts, and bearing headaches next day, with the most unflagging heroism.

"I think I have heard, that your daughter does not dance," he said quietly.

"No; but then she is one of a thousand. Such a queer girl! all the time out of doors. And would you believe it? she works like a servant, sometimes, in. I never could make her refined—never; her cheeks are red as those of a farmer's daughter."

"But that is the result of *exercise*, is it not? and it seems she does not dance enough to

pale her cheeks, and unstring her nerves. I think she is a living proof of my assertion that there is no need of these relaxing and debilitating amusements, and Christ knew what was best for the body and purest for the soul, when he condemned them."

"Still, you religious people are so gloomy, always putting down their faces to the required orthodox length; always protesting against this thing, because they think it wrong, or that thing, because it does not suit their views. You are great egotists," said the lady, sighing unconsciously.

"O! madam, you really wrong us; the sunniest people I know are those who live nearest to Christ. I grant you that many give themselves unwilling sacrifices; they are not living up to the exact requirements of Christ's law; hence they are always under the cloud that hides a sun from them. They know that they do incline to evil; they are not willing to give up long indulged thoughts and pet habits, and thus they constantly shroud them-

selves in darkness and are always crying out, 'oh! my sin, my sin!' No wonder it is ever before them; they keep it there an unclean thing, more foul by being set in the frame of the light of an awakened conscience. Christ says '*put away* the unclean thing;' they say, 'let me keep it a little longer, Lord;' and thus they make themselves perpetual mourners. But to live near Christ, to see all things as it were in the light of his loving look or reproving glance, why, madam, it is kingly; man never feels his greatness without it; the nobility of the stature of the Lord Jesus, for it is His life lived in this human temple. We are Christ's, bought with a price, ransomed with a ransom as far above absolute human comprehension, as the stars without to-night are higher than the flames of these lamps about us. You say Christians are always protesting against what does not suit their views. Pardon me, madam, no real Christian would presume so far; they protest only against what is contrary to the revealed law of God, either as

seen by its invariable results, or as condemned by the language of the Bible."

"Upon my word, we are having a sermon," said the Colonel, "but the man talks well."

Perhaps it would not be too much to say that the Colonel's wife had never thought so long upon a subject, of such vast importance, in all the days of her life, as in these few brief moments.

"But to become this Christian that you speak of, one must give up everything," she said ruefully.

"Yes, madam, you are right there; one *must* give up everything," he spoke with solemn emphasis.

"Property, friends, even husband, wife and children," exclaimed the lady with some asperity.

"Yes, in a certain sense even these must be renounced. But think whom we give them for, to whom we give them! God, who already holds the balance of their fortunes and of their lives. They are no less yours be-

cause they are Christ's, they are no more yours because you withhold them. It is sweeter to receive everything from Him; sweeter to acknowledge our indebtedness than if we felt ourselves monarchs of our fate. But then this is something only His children can feel." He lifted his eyes and caught the absorbed, almost fascinated gaze of Merric Leffingwell. The boy stood leaning against a column, his arms folded, his head thrown back, while the mild beautiful radiance of his soft eyes had changed to an intense throbbing light. For a moment the two stood riveted, each as it were sounding the soul of the other; then a slow, sweet smile crept around Guilford's lips, trembled up to the serene eyes, the fine brow; and Merric, first smiling, pressed a pair of quivering lips together and turned away in tears. Guilford almost shivered as an overwhelming thought took possession of his mind: "that dear boy is under the influence of the Spirit of God." He was recalled from the rapt and solemn joy of the moment by a sharp voice.

"It all sounds very well, but I can't see into it."

"No. It belongeth only to those whom Christ enlightens," said Guilford.

"Who does he enlighten, pray?" queried the invalid.

"Any—*all* who ask for enlightenment," responded the young man.

"O!" Mrs. Leffingwell placed her hand on her side, and her cold, gray eyes glittered. "I feel quite ill; pray call for Mary—Merric—" she sank back, white with sudden pain. Her children and her husband were instantly at her side; the chair was wheeled into another room, and all amusement was forsaken except card-playing. Those who were sitting at the table only turned curious faces, cried "what is it," dealing, or throwing a card down as they spoke; then rapt and forgetful they kept on, never heeding or caring for an answer to their question. Not long after, while Guilford was speaking to Austin with reference to returning, the Colonel came to-

wards them, with the double announcement that Mrs. Leffingwell was much better, and that supper was ready.

"I believe I will not go in to supper," said Guilford, aside to Austin.

"O! now, don't carry your good works too far," said Austin, lightly; "you have made rather a favorable impression in spite of your rigidity. I beg you'll go just in and taste, for the sake of the looks of the thing."

Guilford persuaded himself to be overruled, though he rightly questioned the propriety of these late feasts, and the gay company were soon assembled, where ices, cakes, and fruits were dealt round with liberal hands. Then came the wine. The Colonel looked warily round, as he passed the red glasses; and Guilford shuddered, as he saw them pressed to lips as ruby.

"You take wine, Mr. Coit," said Merric, holding forth a brimming glass.

"No. I never take wine," was the quiet reply. Merric put his glass down.

"He takes it on the sly, or when he is sick," said Austin banteringly.

"I *never* take it," rejoined Guilford. "I have not touched wine, since to save a fellow sailor, I put my signature to the pledge, fourteen years ago.

"But you would take it, were you sick," said some one.

"Not consciously," replied Guilford. "I was very sick on my return passage, and the captain mixed brandy for me several times, but I could not take it. Finally at the worst, on my refusing it, the captain cried with a great oath, 'then let him die!' But I didn't die; and I didn't drink the brandy, either," he added, smiling towards Merric.

"Then, I suppose you think it's wicked for sick people ever to touch wine," said Austin, sipping the lemonade he held, (he never drank wine), and pretending to be much exhilarated thereon. Guilford's look said, "you know me better than that;" his lips replied, "I am no physician, and have no right to judge in *any* case but my own."

"Merric, my son, don't you keep us company, to-night?" queried the Colonel. The boy had not touched the glass.

"Thank you, father; but I believe I had rather not." The fair cheek reddened as he spoke, but there was something like a frown on the Colonel's brow. Perhaps a thought marred his serenity, thus: "that fanatic thinks he is going to have the rule here. He is mistaken."

CHAPTER XI.

HAGER AT PRAYER AND WHAT HER FATHER THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

HULDA stole to the door of her child's room. She had noticed the regularity with which after her noon-day meals Hager had retired silently to her chamber. So noiselessly the mild-faced woman tripped up the stairs, equipped as she was wont to be, towel on arm, cap-strings tied carefully behind her neck, sleeves neatly turned and fastened up, displaying a still plump arm.

A pretty little place it was in which she peeped, wee, white and tidy. A small bed under dimity curtains, a few low chairs, a bunch of flowers on the table, a Bible and a little show of token-books carefully treasured. The door was shut, but like nearly all the rest, half of it was paned with glass, so that

by removing the little curtain carefully the mother saw—what?

Hager with saintly face upturned, hands clasped ever the bed coverlet, with closed eyes, praying.

Like a flood the tears rushed to the mother's lids and would not be restrained. Down they rolled thicker and faster and up from the burdened heart came sobs hard to be conquered; but time was precious and labor called. She turned away, confronting her husband who was just coming up the stairs.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

What impulse was upon her that she should silently lift the curtain; silently point within.

He saw, moved away with a frown and a muttered oath.

"I'll tell you what, wife," he said as he reached the foot of the stairs, and turning sharply round confronted her, "that Coit leaves my house before I'm a week older;" a quiver of passion ran through his voice. "My Hager is Saint by name, but she shan't be a

saint by nature if I can help it. I've noticed the girl lately. She isn't a bit as she used to be, flying about with her pretty, loving ways, and singing voice, and laughing from morning till night. I want none of your pale, long faces about me, and I'll break this up, now, I tell you."

"Hush, father," said Hulda, warningly, for a light step was heard coming. Presently Hager's arms were about her mother's neck.

"O, mother! mother!" she murmured, and the very tones were melody.

"What is it darling?" queried Hulda.

"O! mother, I'm *so* happy!"

She turned to her father, her sweet face was shining, it seemed almost as if a holy flame were flickering upon it, a little way off.

"O! father, dear father, *dear* father!" she cried almost passionately.

The evil spirit came out of him at her yearning glance; he held his arms open and she sprang upon his bosom. Strange emotions penetrated his heart. He seemed to

be folding something purer, brighter than belonged to him. He could not bear to release her.

"You're going to the mill, now, dear," he said as she slid gently out of his clasp.

"Yes, father, good-bye; good-bye mother."

"Good-bye little Toddles; good-bye, darling," murmured Tristam, watching her as she bounded away.

"I'm wondering," murmured Hulda with a slow voice, and slower words, as she turned away, "why the child said good-bye; she never did before."

"Let me see; Hager's sixteen, nigh," pondered Tristam, throwing himself into the kitchen arm-chair, while his wife went busily to work.

"No, father! not these two months yet," responded Hulda Saint; she was thinking so reverently of that sweet vision she had seen up-stairs.

"O! dear. I hope she never'll think of getting married," said Tristam with a sigh.

"We've got enough to keep her all her life."

"That's a selfish wish, Tristam," responded Hulda; yet the momentary thought shadowed her face too. "Poor child! we little know what her future is to be; and I'm glad—" here she stopped abruptly, casting a side glance at Tristam.

"Well, what are you glad of?"

"That I saw her on her knees up-stairs," said Hulda, stoutly; "she'll get strength, there!"

"Fudge!" muttered Tristam, kicking the cat crouching at his feet, which, after a stare of unmitigated astonishment, and a vigorous shake, came back again.

"Did she ask you anything. I mean, has she asked you anything, lately?" inquired Hulda, making a great noise with the knives, as she gathered them up.

"Yes, she has; and you put it into her head, I suppose," was the reply.

"O! no, father. I never thought of it, till she came to me about it. It seems to be her own notion, entirely.

"Then she spoke to you?"

"Yes, she spoke to me first; it was natural, you know; and I told her to come to you. I hope you wasn't harsh about it, father."

"I just give her a flat no; that was all, and told her not to ask me again; and she wont in a hurry, I guess."

"Poor child! she seemed so set upon it. I dreamed about it last night; now I think—" Hulda paused and stood reflective over the table. "Yes, it comes to me; I thought I felt dreadfully about it; about your not wishing it, you know, and she hurried to me. Yes, I remember the same expression on her face, that I saw to-day; the very same. She was dressed in white, pure beautiful white, and says she, "mother dear, I wouldn't grieve—wait patiently; the next time I ask him, he'll say "*yes*."

"No, I wont," muttered Tristam, doggedly,

"I'll have no such goings on here, turning a tavern into Sunday-school, prayer-meeting, and what not. It all comes of that pious

Goby number two," he added crossly, rising and walking about. "I wish I'd said no to *him* at the very first. You wouldn't catch the Colonel putting up with his airs; he'd have to keep a close mouth in his presence, I tell you. Colonel wont bear such things."

"But I hear he talked right out at the grand party the Colonel give. They say he carries his religion wherever he goes."

"Hanged if he shan't carry it from here, then," spoke up Tristam. "He's poisoned Hager's mind, and now, I suppose, he wants to try on ours."

"O! Tristam, think of her face!"

"Pshaw! all excitement and fanaticism. I'll see if I can't root it out, too."

"Take care, take care, Tristam," responded his wife.

"I say I'll have an end of it."

"Tristam, Tristam, think of the Bible, man; 'he that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.'"

"I'll risk it!" cried Tristam, in a loud, defiant voice. "I'll risk it," he repeated, with almost demoniac fierceness. "Hager's *mine*. I wont give her up even to God!"

At that moment, that very second of time, it might have been, came the doom he dared.

CHAPTER XII.

A MYSTERIOUS DISPENSATION.

IT was a warm, autumn afternoon. Very cheerily the birds sang in the old maples outside the mill, till the noon-hush came, but even after that, when the little creatures, in more quiet places were silent, the clash and clatter of machinery induced the mill birds to unwonted exertions.

"Isn't it a sweet afternoon?" Hasn't it been a beautiful day?"

This Hager queried, resting a moment from her work, and looking over from the open window upon the slumbrous hills covered with purple brown haze.

"I wonder if this earth isn't something like heaven! It seems as if it must be, sometimes."

"Hager, what makes you talk of heaven so much, lately?" asked Sarah Church, looking seriously into the soft eyes of the child.

"I don't know, without it's because, I think of it a great deal. O! Sarah," she cried quickly, eagerly, "I don't know what it is, this happiness; I never had it before; not even when I have thought I was as happy as I could be. Sarah—" she drew near her friend blushing, trembling, yet unwontedly animated; "I think it's the praying. Do you go and pray every day all alone by yourself, and you'll find out what it is. I can't explain it, but Mr. Coit can."

Sarah had stood spell-bound, looking pale and sideways at the child, for was there not something in that dear face that had never been there before? something that made her heart shudder as well as glow?

She came slowly out of the spell, saying, softly, "I know, darling, prayer is everything, for when I have been in a great strait, if I prayed, there came an answer. But oh!

Hager, when all is quiet again, how soon we forget?"

"It don't seem as if I could forget," spoke Hager, and an inward smile brightened her sweet face. "Why, I'll tell you how it is," she said, after some moments of deep thought. "There isn't the least *fear* now. I don't know why, but I always was a frightened thing. Mother knew it, and pitied me, and always left me a lamp of nights, because if I locked the door ever so tight, still there was a something that I was afraid of, unless the lamp burned. Well, last night and the night before, I knew I didn't need the lamp. I put it out, and someway felt a pleasure in the darkness, for I was sure I was not alone. Just think! for years and years I havn't done that; there must be something in it, you see, it takes away all fear."

"I've heard so," said Sarah thoughtfully, seemingly fully conscious what the word '*it*' interpreted.

"Then there's another fear I had," Hager

murmured, going on quietly with her work; "and that was of death. I never saw anybody die; I never heard much about it. But there it was, like a shadow that follows one all the time; you know it may be so near. Well, it don't trouble me now," she looked up with such a sunny smile; "it's all gone, the fear is all gone; isn't it wonderful?"

"Wonderful, indeed!" thought Sarah, but she did not speak, and her mental answer had reference more to Hager's countenance; the tenfold enhanced beauty of her winning words and ways.

"I never would have thought of talking of such things before, even to mother," Hager went on "but something makes me wish, this afternoon, that everybody knew what this happiness is!"

Sarah was still silent, and thoughtful. She had heard oftentimes, how the Spirit of God dealt with the human heart, and it seemed as if a messenger had been sent to her in accordance with the Divine purpose, to lead her in the way the young disciple had found.

It happened that she left her work early that afternoon, as she was to go to the next village for her father.

She kissed Hager as she went, and lingering, she knew not why, went very slowly down the stairs, her mind still excited by what she had heard from the lips of little Hager. As she passed the office of the agent, Guilford was just coming towards the door. He smiled as they met, and held out his hand in his usual frank, kindly way.

"Well, what news from home?" he asked.

"Almost the best," was her reply. "Father is getting on bravely. You should have seen him when the new set of tools came this morning."

"Pleased, was he?" responded Guilford.

"As a child. He went to work immediately, and I fear I shall find him utterly exhausted, he is so excitable! such an enthusiast!"

"He wants the strength of Christ, for ballast," said Guilford. "Perhaps that thought

was in your mind, when you said concerning the home-news, 'almost the best.'"

She smiled thoughtfully. "It certainly was," was the reply; "or something very like."

There was a strange sound above stairs. They both remarked it, but thought it nothing unusual, and Sarah went on. Why she lingered, once outside the mill door, she could not tell. Her business required haste, but she fell suddenly in a bewildered state, that held her footsteps unaccountably.

Presently there was a voice: it called her name. She looked back. A trembling, haggard figure stood in the door-way—its eyes blank, its lips ashen.

"O! Sarah, Sarah Church! you can't tell what's happened!" issued from the quivering mouth.

"What has happened?" Sarah stood still in amaze, feeling as if the whole world had suddenly grown dark.

"O! Sarah Church,"—the voice was almost

drowned in tears—" it's awful! That dear little Hager—Hager—"

Sarah paused no longer. Dashing through the door-way, she hurried up the stairs at a frantic speed. The mill was as still as death; all the wondrous wheels had ceased vibrating; how was it with the little wheel of the more wonderful machinery of Hager Saint's sweet life. Sarah's heart beat with deadly strokes as she thought of this, and pushed on through throngs of horror-stricken operatives, on to the principal crowd where she knew the question would be solved.

The dear child! the patient child, there she lay—needless to tell how, in the arms of Guilford Coit—not gone yet; but, some gasped with hot tears, how much better if it were so. Her eyes, unnaturally large, were fastened on his face. The white, beaded drops of anguish stood on her forehead—dear sufferer! patient lamb!

" How did it happen?" oh, tell me!" whispered Sarah, pressing her hands with a clasp like locked marble over her heart.

"We don't know, except that we saw her drawn under the shaft," said an elderly woman who stood near. They were just stopping the machinery, or—" she shuddered and turned away.

"Who—*who* will tell her father?" whispered Sarah Church.

"As soon as they get something made to carry her on, you see they are at work, word will be sent at once. Who will go I know not, unless it is the agent; I would n't for the world."

Sarah felt her heart sink. The utter desolation of that household swept like a wave over her being. Tristam Saint's love for his child was a household proverb: "as much as Tristam Saint loves little Hager."

For "little Hager" she had always been, and to those who knew her always would be. Her blue, laughing eyes and innocent face, scarcely changed as did her stature—and from being such a pet at home, all her ways were winning and child-like.

"The bed was made of soft wool and cotton, and Guilford decided that he would precede the sad burden and tell the sorrowful news as best be could. But when he started from her side, she evinced great agitation, and the falling tears and yearning glance told that she wanted his presence in her suffering.

Seeing this, Guilford Coit looked around him. "Who will go?" he asked, and his eye fell on Sarah. For a moment a coldness like death came over her, but remembering little Hager's own simple words, she prayed, and then with a mournful firmness she said, "I will go."

She turned silently and left the room, hearing behind her the slow tramp of those who were bearing the sorrowful burden. All the way she heard, or seemed to hear, that deep measuring of footsteps. Hager's mother stood out on the porch, white with her sudden fear, for afar off she had seen a sight unusual in that quiet place, and without speaking to her husband, who was taking his nap

in the bar-room, she came out to inquire what it meant. The face of Sarah Church smote her with yet a sharper dread; all her mother's fears were roused.

"Sarah, what has happened? How you look! Something has frightened you—is it Mr. Coit; is *he* hurt? or Mr. Grande, Sarah?" she sobbed falteringly, catching at both shoulders as the young girl stood before her. "Is it—" a great gasp came, but not the word.

"O, Mrs. Saint you *will* be calm," trembled Sarah. "Hager is hurt, we don't know how much. The doctor is coming with them; is there a bed ready?"

"Hager? Hager hurt? a bed ready?" muttered the woman vaguely, turning from side to side, trembling all over like a frail leaf shaken in the gale. What will Tristam say? *Don't* tell Tristam," she pleaded, not moving, however; the news seemed to have rooted her to the spot.

"No, but dear Mrs. Saint, shall I go in? they are almost here, and there must be a bed ready."

"There are beds all over the house," sobbed Hulda, her lips growing white while she held out her clasped hands in an attitude of dumb, deep agony. "O! Sarah, Sarah! what *will* Tristam say?

The men had drawn quite near, and Mrs. Saint flew towards the pale burden they bore, for Hager was quite insensible now. The noise they made awoke the tavern-keeper who came to the door in the jolliest of moods, a broad smile on his face, for he expected customers from the lower village. It was awful to see the instantaneous change from a hilarous mirth to a ghastly wonder. His large frame fell back instantly against the house, then with a sudden bound he cleared the portico, pushed, regardless of persons, one and another from between him and that white face, and with a groan like a yell, he fell on his knees at the side of his child.

"Don't you dare to tell me that you've killed her, any of you," he shrieked out almost savagely.

"She must be carried in the house immediately," said Guilford Coit, in a calm low voice.

"*You* have done it; you have brought evil on my house," growled the half crazy man, as he encountered the eye of Guilford.

"Everything depends upon expedition now," said the agent, resolutely; "lead the way, mother," he added gently to the half fainting woman, who stood there powerless, as Guilford took the slender form in his arms.

Tristam seemed now beginning to comprehend. The great drops of sweat started to his brow; he clenched his hands and groaned in the bitterness of his spirit, as he passively followed Guilford, who deposited his burden on her mother's bed. Tristam walked the adjoining room, uttering fearfully spasmodic groans. Hager, his idol, bruised, broken, dying perhaps.

"O! doctor," he cried, clinging to the latter as he passed him, "she's gone, isn't she? dead, isn't she? Tell me, doctor, tell me the worst."

"She is still living," said the young physician.

"But dying—she will never speak to me; never know me; oh! doctor, doctor, don't tell me that."

"It is impossible for me to say," replied the doctor. "She must be kept perfectly quiet; much depends upon that. Do not distress her by your sorrow, if she comes out of this fit."

"If she comes out of it!" cried Tristam, wringing his hands, and a great burst of anguish followed, mingled with terrible imprecations.

CHAPTER XIII.

GRANDE THE DOUBTER.

SINCE the night of the party at Rose Hedge, Mrs. Leffingwell had twice sent for Guilford. The impression made upon her mind at that time, appeared to be slowly but steadily deepening. Mary, seeing how her mother's attention seemed more abstracted from the things of the world, grew even more gentle and willing; and when she was requested to read from the holy Scripture, did so with a voice and manner proving that in her heart there were indications of a need, such as nothing in the world could meet. She however struggled mightily against such convictions, inasmuch as they showed to her the unsatisfying nature of earthly enjoyments, which she could not yet resign. Guilford's Sabbath days (and two had gone since the

terrible accident happened to Hager), were passed almost wholly in her sick room. If Guilford could only soothe, sit by her, and hold her hand, Hager seemed unwontedly happy. The tears of pain were withheld, and smiles, calm and holy, took their place. If he read to her, modulating his voice to slow, low music, her eyes sparkled with an almost heavenly light. She did not seem to require his care when she knew that he was employed at the mill, but for the hour of its close she looked with longing eyes, and her face grew radiant when he appeared. Sometimes Austin Grande sat in the room with him. It was a large, cheerful apartment, fragrant in summer with the scent of sweet-briar and heliotrope, that came in from the little garden, which had been Hager's special care.

The child had only been moved by loving hands since the accident; she could not help herself. It was touching to see the unearthly resignation with which she bore her misfortune.

"If anything would convince me of the reality of religion," said Austin, one Sabbath morning, when Hager had fallen into a refreshing sleep, "it would be the state of that child. Her very face speaks of peace; but then she was always a gentle and happy creature. There are some natures that are miracles to us from the cradle to the grave. I think hers is one; for, during the three years I have lived here, I never saw her otherwise than as she is now."

"But is it nature," asked Guilford "that teaches her that wonderful resignation to God's will? Have you ever heard one word of repining because she was cut down in an untimely moment, and laid upon a bed of almost unremitting torture? Think of it, Austin; a young creature hardly yet sixteen, capable of such exquisite enjoyment; willing to drink the cup of suffering and death; and not only willing, but rejoicing that she is going to die."

Austin was silent for a moment. Then he spoke again,

"She knows the wish for life is unavailing, and that soon she will be free from pain and trouble. I tell you, Guilford Coit, that were I lying where she is, the prospect of release from all suffering so near, I think I should be as willing to go as she is."

"But would you have the same faith, the same sublime hope? Could you exclaim with her, 'I *know* that my Redeemer liveth?'" asked Guilford.

"No," replied Austin, severely, "simply because I do not know. Women and children are easy to be entreated. They will believe in the merest vagaries, the most absurd chimeras," was the reply.

"Then you class the hope of immortality, the glorious belief of a holy existence beyond the narrow boundary of death, among chimeras; the faith that transforms the sensualist into the pure and devout believer, the trust in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, among mere vagaries. Language cannot tell how sincerely I pity you," said Guilford, and lip and voice trembled.

"I do; I think them all the veriest delusions," Austin exclaimed, his brow growing dark. "They are beautiful while they last, no doubt, though they make a man a thorough egotist, but as I see them I can find no foundation to stand upon. A say so, will not do for me, and no one ever came back to prove the spirit's immortality."

"Except the Saviour of men," said Guilford, pained to his heart.

"Ah! that, too, is a 'they say,'" replied Austin, gloomily.

"Thank God that it was ever recorded!" exclaimed Guilford with Christian fervor.

Suddenly there was a voice spoke, clear, sad and solemn.

"O! Mr. Grande, do believe in Jesus." The plaintive, tearful tones startled them both, and turning they saw Hager's face, pale to a deathly whiteness with emotion.

"Why should I, child, why should I?" the young man asked, hurriedly going towards the bed.

"Because there is nothing else worthy to be loved," spoke the suffering girl. "Oh! if I could only tell you how beautiful He is!" she reiterated, with holy rapture. "While I lie here, I think and wonder if anything can be compared to Him. I think of the sun, the stars, the glorious mountains, the flowers, the love of my father and mother, but they are all as nothing to Him; all as nothing," she murmured reverently. "To see Him, to be with Him, is worth all this pain. I wish you knew how glorious He is."

"I am perfectly willing to believe as you do, little Hager, if I only could."

"O! you can! 'with the *heart* man believeth unto salvation,' with the *heart*, Mr. Grande. If you would only pray as I did, pray till it comes," she said.

"Till what comes?" queried Austin.

"Believing; it's *all* in believing," said Hager, smiling upon him.

Hager's father was below stairs much of his time. He could not endure the sick

chamber of his child, nor understand why she had been thus smitten and afflicted. He could not, or rather, would not be reconciled, nor call it the will of God. He charged the Deity with revenge and mocked Him in his desolation. He hardened his own heart, and even the gentle pleadings of his idolized child had apparently but little effect upon his unhappy mood.

"What has she done, that God should afflict her so?" was his fierce query. "Why did he choose Hager from among all the rest? Other people had three and four children there, and they were all spared. Say what you will, it was cruel, it was vindictive. I never will think otherwise."

With his mind his body seemed to suffer correspondingly. From the sleek, portly landlord, he had come to be the thin, white-lipped, sunken-cheeked misanthrope. One would scarcely have recognised him, as he stood there on the Sunday in which the two young men sat with Hager, leaning against

one of the portico-posts, his attitude, that of a man in despair. In this position the stately Colonel found him.

"Well, Saint," said the latter, reining in his powerful horse, "you're looking bad, man; you need exercise; you're fretting yourself to death. We must all have our troubles, you know, and it wont do to let them wear upon us."

"If it was an ordinary trouble, I could bear it," muttered the landlord, hanging his head.

"It's a bad case, no two ways about that," said the Colonel. "But then there's a skeleton in every man's house. Look at me; no knowing when my poor wife will go. Where's Coit?"

"He's up stairs with Hager. He's a great comfort to the child."

"Yes, yes, he's got the faculty. Magnetism, I suppose it is, or some other charm. Takes with women, especially if they're weakly, with a rush. Here's my wife sent me down after him; wants to talk about reli-

gion, as people generally do in that state ; may want to myself. But hang it, what's come over the town, Saint? the old place isn't like itself. Used to be cheerful, but it's dull as death, now. How is Hager?"

"Very bad, Colonel," and tears rushed into Tristam's eyes.

"Not hopeless, I trust."

"Yes, hopeless. O! if I had only died before this come."

The pathos, the real anguish in the voice, made the Colonel turn his head away, suddenly.

"Well, after all, Saint, it's a hard sort of an old world, ain't it? Used to look pretty bright to me, too, and does now, sometimes ; but in comes misfortune, or sickness, or death, and sets us adrift. Look here, where is Coit? I ought to be in a hurry?"

"He is up-stairs ; I will call him."

Guilford made his appearance in a moment.

"Take Grande and go up town, will you? My wife wants to see you," said the Colonel.

"Is she ill, again?" queried Guilford.

"No worse than usual," was the reply; "good morning, Mr. Coit. Don't let her talk more than half an hour."

Guilford left Hager with some reluctance, but her mother sat, her face assumedly cheerful, in his place; and Austin and the agent took their way towards Rose-Hedge.

"What a beautiful morning!" said Guilford.

"To you, I dare say," responded Austin.

"And it would be to you, if only—oh! my friend, why will you stay in the dark? Why not come out in God's glorious light?"

"I don't see any light," was the reply.

"Austin, where are you?" Guilford stopped in his walk.

"In doubting Castle," replied Austin, smiling gloomily.

"Why don't you come out?"

"A giant guards the door," was the reply.

"God is greater than the giant Unbelief," responded Guilford.

"I don't know Him," was the reckless answer.

They were nearing the door of the workhouse. Three decrepid men, and a few women, were gathered in a group on the front porch. Here and there a child stood, or played with the flowers that grew wild.

In their midst sat the old man Goldby, reading aloud, and that so intently, that he did not see his friend. The distant corn fields, the pretty farm houses, the hills in magnificent reaches, swelling against the horizon, and the white-headed old man, bending over the holy book, made a picture that lacked not beauty, aided as it was by the spirituality of the good Christian's countenance.

"Yes, Jesus came to save that which was lost," repeated the aged reader, looking with a loving smile over his little band of lame and halt and blind. "Temptations, trials, and sorrows, ought not to overcome us, while we have a prince who gave his life for us, sitting forever at the right hand of

God. How pleasant it will be, Jim Lane, when you get ready to go, to throw away the old crutch, and walk with the light step of a young man, again, over the golden streets of the New Jerusalem. And you, Betsy Gray, who cannot see the glories of even this poor earth, how will your new eyes be dazzled by the splendor of the throne, and the glory of the wonders of that beautiful home? You too, Elizabeth Eaton, whose poor body is racked with pain from daylight to twilight, you shall rest there, and never shall you say, 'I am sick!' The vigor that made us able to bear fatigue in our youth, the lightness of frame that exhilarated and gave strange joy, will all come back again. There'll be no sighing, no tears, no night, but all one long, bright glory."

"Wont it be beautiful?" an old man lisped, in a voice filled with grateful awe.

"Yes, it will be heaven, heaven!" murmured the blind Betsey Gray. "O, 'tis good to love Jesus."

Guilford turned silently to Austin, and was surprised to see him looking over to the farthest hill, not a trace of emotion on his face. He had masked himself well.

"Let us go on," said Guilford, and without disturbing the group on the alms house porch, they continued their walk to Rose Hedge.

Mary Leffingwell met them at the door with a courteous manner. Under an appearance of great indifference she hid the signs of an uneasy and awakened conscience. In truth, she both dreaded and liked the new agent. A superior discernment revealed to her that he was far beyond the average of mankind, in all points that went to make up his character. She even admired, haughty as she was, the outspoken frankness of his speech, whenever religious subjects were introduced, and sin was fearlessly rebuked by him.

"I'll go to the conservatory," said Austin, as Guilford and himself entered the sitting-room.

"Go," said Guilford, "and I pity you if you

do not see God in the humblest flower He has made," he added to himself.

Maud Mary led the way to her mother's room. It was on the ground floor, large and airy, and scattered about were many evidences of the wealth and taste of the occupants. Mrs. Leffingwell was seated in an easy chair. Her face looked thinner and more spiritual than was its wont.

"I'm very glad to see you," she said to Guilford, holding out her hand. "Here I sit as now, day after day; it is very wearisome."

"It must be," responded Guilford, pity in his voice.

"I'm not very happy, either," continued Mrs. Leffingwell, and round the rims of her eyes the tears began to crowd. "It used to give me some satisfaction to dress, and to play cards, but now, I don't know why it is, I can't take any comfort in either."

"The immortal soul craves immortal employment," said Guilford.

"I begin to see that," said Mrs. Leffingwell,

softly stroking the head of a pet spaniel that placed its fore paws on her knee and was regarding her with fond eyes. "You don't know how I feel, Mr. Coit, when I look back; why, what a dead, dreary waste it seems! I have not thought of anything but myself. What *shall* I do? What *have* I got to think of, after this? what good have I done? Why, Mr. Coit, what *have* I been doing all my life?"

These questions she asked as if standing in judgment before herself; her gaze introverted, her lips pale, her fingers working nervously in and out together.

"If I could only *think* whether I had ever consoled anybody, even by word or look, but such things never occurred to me. It was, what shall I wear? Which way shall I go? The soul, the soul! why I don't know as I ever cared whether I *had* a soul. God? why, He never entered my thoughts. I have only lived for dancing and eating, and visiting and fashion, and now my soul is buried up under all this rubbish."

"My dear madam," said Guilford, quickly, "you could never see your soul in the state it is if God's spirit had not moved the rubbish. He is letting the light in; He is giving you a chance to clear away the earthly matter that has weighed down your better nature. Do not despair; Christ is nearer than you think."

"But the past, the past! how trifling! how miserable! how utterly worthless! oh, if I could only forget the past."

"You must forget the past," said Guilford, gently, "you need have thought and care only for the future, now. O, madam! the salvation of an immortal soul, the change from nature's darkness to God's marvellous light, is a matter so mighty, so all engrossing, that the whole heart, mind and spirit should be concentrated upon it to the exclusion of every thing else."

"Yes, I do feel it, but even if heaven should be merciful to me, think how few days I shall give to God, what a low seat I shall take in heaven, and it might have been so different."

"That is the last thing to ponder on now. A man rescued from a burning or a sinking ship does not murmur that he is not placed in the cabin of the vessel that gives him shelter and safety. That he is out of danger is his first consideration, as it should be yours. What if you are but an infant in holiness when you enter heaven? there is all eternity to grow in."

The thought seemed to give her comfort, and Guilford remained talking with her until he feared that she had already exhausted her strength. But as her hopes rose, her vigor seemed to grow with them. This new food was very sweet, refreshing, invigorating. He told her of Hager, for whom she professed the deepest sympathy.

"Go and get her some of the choicest flowers," she said, as he was taking his leave; "and tell her to pray for me," she added, almost in a whisper. He passed through the sitting-room. Mary sat reading. She arose as he walked by. An impulse came over him

and he could not restrain it. He held out his hand and she gave him hers; he said, "do not wait; offer him the fulness and beauty of your youth."

She withdrew her hand in seeming displeasure, and gave him a haughty glance, but to do this she was obliged to hold back the crowding tears, and he knew it.

On his way to the conservatory, his prayers were most fervent for this interesting household. The warm, sweet breath of the flowers greeted him as he entered under the tropical vines and the bright fruited orange-trees. There was a sound of voices afar down the vista of green and crimson and gold. It was Austin Grande, talking with the old gardener, a man of good appearance, and who had been in Clifton Locks but a few weeks. Slowly moving onward, Guilford saw a leathern-covered Bible with iron clasps, lying upon one of the flower-stands, and beside it a pair of steel-bowed spectacles. He opened the volume; it had evidently been long and

thoroughly handled, constantly and attentively read. Still holding it in his hand, he sauntered along, his eyes riveted by this passage:

"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification."

The words seemed to take on a new meaning to him. "Some," he thought to himself, "have even been impressed by the voices of these little flowers, for they have a language in which to praise God."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GARDENER'S STORY.

"WHOSE is this?" he asked, holding up the volume as he drew near Austin and the gardener.

"If you please, its mine, sir," said the latter, with a strong English accent.

"Perhaps we are brothers, then," said Guilford, "for if I mistake not, none but a Christian would give such a book such usage.

"I humbly trust I am," said the man.

"He has been telling me something about his life," interposed Austin, willing to change the conversation. "It seems he was once a miner, in England."

"Yes, sir, a downright, hard chap, I were, too; but God, He had mercy on even such a one as I. I were brought up a gardener, sir, but there were a good chance to earn better wages, so I took to the mines."

"And how long since you've been a Christian, my friend."

"O! sir"—the man seemed struck with a sudden anguish—"that's ever sense I lost my wife and my baby to onct, sir." He shook his head, and his strongly curved lips trembled.

"Ah! And would it trouble you to tell us about it?" asked Guilford, anxious to use every available means that might impress Austin.

"Well, no, I don't know, as it would," responded the gardener, as the three seated themselves. "I never had much training when I were a youngster, and I s'pose I was specially a hard case. I can't remember anytime, whatsomever, that I ever heered of any prayer, or God, or the Bible. My father was head gardener on an estate in Dorsetshire, and I were with him, till I had the chance I spoke to you of. One day when I'd got along somewhere about twenty-four or five, I says to myself, 'I'm not going to have any of the women here, for a wife,' so off I started for Tipton, a

town ten miles off. My mother had a cousin in Tipton, who was what she called 'dreadful pious,' that is she went to meeting three times in a Sunday, and thought powerful of her minister; that was where I went; marched into the house like one of the family, and there became acquainted with Barbara.

"She were a pretty lass, and I soon see she was pious, too; so I used to pretend to read the Bible, and I'd go down on my knees at prayers, so that after a while I was pretty well off in that quarter.

"Well, you see, I still passed off for a gardener, but it kind o' went agen my heart, when she put her hand in mine, so gentle-like, and said she'd be mine, to think I'd deceived her so. Heaven forgive me! The girl loved me more than father or mother. I was n't worth one of her thoughts. She was a delicate, purty little thing, with dancing blue eyes, and a slow kind of smile, that someway went directly to the heart. And you see, I loved her that much, I did n't dare to tell

her for the life of me, how I'd deceived her, till she was almost home.

"Then I said to her, says I, 'I didn't tell you the truth about my business.'

"With that she looked up so—the smile trying to come, but it couldn't—that it choked me.

"'Barbara,' says I, 'I ain't a gardener now, though I have been one; I'm a miner, and it's coarse, ugly work, and you ain't fit to be my wife, I know. But I—I loved ye, Barbara,' and saying that, I couldn't stand the look in her eyes; I had to turn away.

"'O! Jack, how could ye? Maybe I would'nt care what the work was,' she said, 'but oh! I do mind the deceiving!' and she began to cry.

"Well, instead of saying I was sorry, as I ought, or that I'd try to make it up by my good behavior; and feeling mad with myself and mad at her tears, I jest set sullen till she come to. Then she laid her little hand on my arm, and she says,

"'Jack, have you deceived me about being a Christian, too? Have I trusted ye all this while to be disappointed in *that*?'

"I jest shook her hand off, like a brute, and says I,

"It's none of your business what I am. If you've a mind to believe me pious, why do so; but hark ye, I'm none of your canting sort.

"With that she fetched a great sob, and that made my temper rise. First I could feel it heating me all through here in the breast, and then it came to my throat, and worked out of my mouth, and I began my first married day with words that I've wished since had choked me. I was always famous for my ugly temper. There wasn't a man among the miners that didn't fear me, and I didn't care showing off on them; but it never'd came to my mind that I'd talk that way to poor little Barbara. After I'd got through she was dreadful still, and her face was so white and sorrowful I could have bit myself for having

said an unkind word, but I could not confess.

"Well, we got home in the dusky, bare place near the mines, and I took Barbara, poor thing, into my mother's cottage.

"Previous to that I'd writ my mother to receive her new child kindly, and so she tried to, but I could see she didn't take to her from the minnit she set eyes on her. Mother never was pleased with anybody that wasn't strong. She was a great worker herself, and she'd often flung out about her consin (whom she hadn't seen for twenty years) because she married a city man and set herself down to sewing.

"Mother told Barbara all about my temper, too, and I do believe that remorse made me uglier than ever at times. She tried to be happy—poor Barbara—tried her very best, but I could see that she hadn't confidence in me any more, and it was kind o' wearing her out, like. Two or three times I went home in a tearing passion, but one night I believe I was crazy

with my temper. I don't like to think of it. I wasn't satisfied with common oaths, but took whatever I heard or knew of God and turned it over in every possible way, so that I could use good and sacred words as vilely as possible. The poor girl fainted away, and not long after there was a little child in my arms and I was crying over it.

"Well, sir, it seemed to me that the minnit I felt the touch of them little fingers, a change came over me, and I was another man. It seemed so *then* and long after. I tried to curb my passion, tried to think always of my little angel, tried to behave better to my patient wife."

The man paused a moment and toyed with a delicate passion-flower, standing near, but presently he began again.

"Well, perhaps I'll never see heaven; I don't know. I used to feel so a great deal, and when I've been wretched and lonely, before I came from England, I'd go to a great green hillock near the mines, and look up, up, try-

ing to find a way among the stars, trying to think how I should feel if an angel walked down it, down to me, poor miserable man! and so I get thinking of my baby. She's always an angel to me. It was so curious to think that I, great rude miner, with stained hands and blackened face, should be the father of anything so white and handsome. O! if you could have seen the eyes, so large, so blue! that always seemed a talking to me, and gave me a clean feeling to know they were looking at me. And then the curls! I used to wonder how Barbara dared to brush and turn them so; I wouldn't a' dared hardly to touch one. It seemed as if it would melt away from my fingers. Even my old mother loved that child, and if I ever came home out o' sorts, she'd just say, 'baby wants to see you,' and that would calm me, like.

"Well, one day, a meddlesome fellow, Bill Warner, and I got into a quarrel about a blast, and we both had backers. It wouldn't do for us to fight it out there, so we agreed to settle

it that night, and after work took a drink on it. I think they put something in that drink, for I kept boiling up all the way home, and I felt I should vent my spite on somebody before the time for the quarrel came. True enough, I'd no sooner set my foot on the door-sill, than all the fiends in me gave a great bound, and at it I went. I cursed Bill Warner, and still talking with oaths, I—well, I don't like to tell that part. She always said she fell against it—the open sheath knife in my hand—she said her foot stumbled. Well, no matter, it wasn't that that killed her. The doctor said it was only a small flesh wound, it would heal soon. He bound it up, and things went on, I was going to say, as usual, but they didn't. Before I left in the morning —I'd backed out of the fight, you see, for her sake—I saw Barbara trying to wake the baby. She was weak, and lying down, and couldn't seem to manage it, so I went to lift it—don't mind me, gentlemen, I never speak of that but I cry like a child. It almost killed me,

sir; it *did* kill her. That dear little angel was dead. It never opened them beautiful eyes again. O! I thought I should have gone stark mad, standing there holding it, frozen, like, my eyes glued on it, and Barbara crying out very fast, 'what is it? what is the matter?'

"O, dear! I laid it in her arms; what else could I do? I laid the little dead thing right in her arms. She didn't speak a word, only looked first at the baby, then at me, shivering as if she held it like cold ice against her heart.

"'Maybe 'tisn't gone, Barbara,' I kept saying, but she never spoke, only her eyes grew wilder and her cheek whiter, and my mother whispered, 'go for the doctor, Jack, or she'll die too. I don't think I felt anything the whole way. I was stunned. I couldn't even speak to him, but he saw there was something worse than usual on hand, and he jumped on his horse. But I got there first—yes, fast as he went, I was there before him. I've heard

of flying to the uttermost ends of the earth; I believe if I'd kept on, I should have got there.

"Barbara, poor white thing! still held the baby—still shook like an ague; and there were great black hollows under her eyes.

"'Why! how's this?' asked the doctor. 'Ah! I see—shock last night; the baby nursed, didn't it? Yes; disordered the stomach; had a fit—died.'

"All this time I sat in the corner, cursing myself, tearing my hair, and pinching my body, till I almost pulled the flesh off. There was a rushing sound in my ears, and I was all in a seethe just as I've seen the earth look when it was going to break after a blast; the cracks running in every direction, and the ground pricking out and quivering. O! I didn't know which way to turn. I'd felt thankful to see some one standing before me with a loaded gun; I wanted to curse God and die!

"Says the doctor, 'you'd better come here,

now, young man;' and I got to the bedside, I don't know how. She was looking straight at me, and the old, slow smile, was coming into her face.

"'Let me take her, Barbara,' I said, for I felt somehow as it was awful for her to be hugging the dead baby.

"She only shook her head, and gave me one of her sweet looks, then turning her eyes up, once, as if she saw something, and cuddling the baby up closer, she—she—died. Yes, sir, and I hope you'll excuse me for showing off this way. I ain't a crying man; I never shed a tear as I know of, before that time, and hardly since. But when I saw them both—baby and my poor Barbara, that I had killed—yes, both of them—language ain't strong enough to tell you my feelin's. O! no, I can't seem to believe they ever belonged to me; and though they was within hand's touch of me, I could seem to see a great river rolling between us.

"But I vowed a vow there, gentlemen, that may God help me keep. I vowed over them,

and I believe they knew it, somewhere, that I'd try to be pious, as she was, and I'd never, so long as I held the memory of that little face, no, never get ugly again, and so far, I haven't broke it. Sometimes it seems as if all the evil spirits in the world get at me, to tempt my ugly out of me; but there's one little white face, with blue eyes, and such light, soft, silky curls, jist there front of me; I seem to see it, sir; that has more power than all them fiends. And when I'm sore pressed, and the temper threatens to git the upper hand of me, I takes my Bible, that old Bible there, that a pious old man give me, fifteen year ago, and I kneels down and prays. I don't know what kind o' praying it is. I expect there wouldn't anybody understand it but God; and I wouldn't think He did, if I didn't have a light feel after it, that doesn't come only to folks as is pious. Well, sir, I'm getting better of my ugly. Them little fingers is leading the rough old miner up to the mouth of that great shaft, and I hope soon to jump out among the stars, and ha' done

with the dark pit o' life. And then I'll see my baby, sir; my baby, if she *is* an angel. I'll see my wife, and she'll give me that good old smile; I know she will. And they two wont be the only ones that'll say 'well done!' when I enter into them joys that no ears has heard tell of, and no eyes has seen."

The gardener paused. The quivering of his lip, the starting of the big tear had ceased, and his face took on a quiet peace and humility. Austin had raised his eyes but seldom during the recital of the humble experience, and when he did so, at last, it was evident that he had been greatly affected.

"You all tell the same story," he said, after Guilford had spoken with the gardener, and they were leaving the conservatory.

"Yes, the story of the cross," said Guilford, smiling.

"It's all Greek to me," was the gloomy reply.

"And will be, till you humble yourself to learn it," said Guilford.

CHAPTER XV.

A GREAT REFORMATION.

THE Colonel was just coming into the yard. Merric sat on a beautiful gray pony behind him.

"You'll both stop to dinner, surely," he said.

"No, sir, I thank you," replied the agent.

"I wish you would," said Merric, heartily, his grasp still within that of Guilford's.

"I would, but—"

"It is one of your fixed principles never to dine out Sundays, I suppose," said Austin.

"It is."

"Very well; carry my regards to little Hager; tell her I picked most of the flowers," and Austin Grande placed the beautiful bunch in Guilford's care, and stepped back on the piazza.

"I will do so," said Guilford, quietly, and

walked away, leaving Austin standing beside the Colonel. The young man entered the house again with Merrie, dissatisfied and uneasy. He felt that he had held back merely to show his opposition to his friend. There was a singular combination of opposite elements warring in his mind, just now: admiration of Guilford Coit's character, a dislike amounting almost to hatred of the religion he professed, notwithstanding he felt its holiness and saw its justice. In his soul he said, though he knew it not, "I will not have this man, Christ Jesus, to rule in my heart."

The Colonel joined his wife; the three young people sat together. Naturally, Guilford become the theme of conversation.

"He is too perfect," said Miss Mary, with a curl of the lip. She was looking through some sacred songs to find one Austin had asked her to sing.

"I'm sure there's nothing Puritanical about him," responded Merrie. "When I go into the office I find him first rate company, I can

tell you. He's grand at telling stories, and the best of it is, he gets 'em off so dryly, and still he never swears, or says the least thing in an ungentlemanly manner. Now Hunt was exactly his opposite. Hunt was always talking about spreeing it, and even in the presence of ladies he was not careful about his language. Well, poor fellow, there he is in prison, at last."

"In prison!" ejaculated his sister.

"Yes, father and I have learned to-day that he was arrested for another robbery, and now this will be proved upon him, too."

"Then father will get his money again, and he made me a promise once that if ever he did he would give me half. A thousand dollars, only think! I shall have five hundred. Will father prosecute?"

"He says he will," replied the young man; "the loss will probably fall on Hunt's father, who is a man of property. He is very honest, they say, and declares no one shall lose by his son if it beggars him. It will kill him though;

what a pity for a good father to have such a son. But what will you do with your five hundred, sis?"

"Give it to Mr. Coit to build a meeting-house," laughingly responded Mary.

"Take care, sis, many a true word spoken in jest, you know."

"Perhaps Miss Leffingwell will found an asylum for monomaniacs," said Austin, a slight curl of the lip betraying the half sneer.

Merric looked up, his face aglow with a generous indignation: "I wish I was just such a monomaniac as that man is," he said, the quick flush springing to his face. "I believe he's none of your half-way Christians, but good all through. I've seen a great many professors of religion, and some of them in earnest, too, but it seemed an effort to them to keep right. Now it isn't so with Guilford Coit. He's made up his mind, that man has, that his religion shall govern him, not he his religion. And if ever I make up my mind to be a Christian, I hope I shall be one after his

pattern. He's one of the happiest fellows I ever knew. You always hear him singing or humming, and I should just like to know what other man can smile as he does? Why, he seems to take you right into his heart."

"Bravo! well done, Merric, quite eloquent, upon my word! who's the paragon?"

Merric rallied after a momentary confusion. His father's handsome, hearty, wondering face confronted him, as he turned.

"I needn't have asked the question, however," said the Colonel; "of course, there is but one perfect man in all Clifton Locks, every body knows that, and he takes care that they shall."

"Father, that is ungenerous," said Merric, his eyes kindling again. "I beg your pardon, but I must protest against your last remark. Mr. Coit is unusually modest and unpretending. He never forces his opinions upon any one."

"Not in words, I grant you, but the fellow seems determined to make you feel in some

way, if it's only by a look that he is better than you are," replied the Colonel, almost angrily. "He might be just as honest, capable, and all that he is, without making such a fuss about it. There's your mother worried almost into fits by him; mourning her wickedness, poor woman! What has she ever done that she need be in fear of a future; a harmless unoffending creature like her? If I had as few sins on my soul as she has, death wouldn't look very terrible to me."

All this time Mary sat at the piano, aimlessly turning over the leaves of her music, but listening eagerly to every word. Young as she was, and inexperienced in the ways of the world, she was yet conscious that her mother's whole life had been one of frivolity and vanity. She knew in her soul that there was a difference, a higher life to be lived than the standard to which her youthful mind had been directed, and she awaited her brother's reply with interest.

"I think if we should judge ourself by the

Bible-standard," said Merric, "the most harmless and innocent seeming among us would need repentance."

"And what man is there but repents?" asked Austin.

"Ah! you and I need a different sort of penitence from the merely sentimental," said Merric, as, much agitated and with a pale face, he left the room.

"I must stop Coit from talking to that boy. He holds him there for hours together; I suspect he wants to make him as strait-laced a Puritan as he is himself," said the Colonel angrily. "I must stop it and I will."

Meantime Sarah Church, in her humble little home, enjoyed the fruits of her long and earnest devotion to her father. On this same Sunday afternoon she sat with him on the porch of their little house. Sarah had grown thoughtful in her content, but her dark eyes beamed with an inward pleasure, a peace above all others, that had lately taken up its abode in her heart. Everywhere about them

seemed thrift and content. The orchard had been carefully pruned and dug about, long neglected fences mended, bushes cut and trimmed, flowers cleared of weeds, and the whole place seemed rejuvenated. Even the gate and the door had received a coat of paint, and over the latter a vine that had laid trailing in every unseemly direction over wall and window, was tastefully trained and fastened, so that it made the place like a bower. Better than all, her father sat beside her, clothed in his right mind. For weeks he had not touched the unclean thing, and he seemed to take so much pleasure in the work of renovation, as it progressed under his hands, that he had no inclination for the baser excitements to which he had become accustomed. Sarah, like a wise and judicious girl as she was, followed up all these good results with the most pains-taking care. She arose early and put everything in order, that the house she wished to keep sacred might look pleasant to him. She took the little earnings formerly devoted

to ornaments, and purchased delicacies with which to tempt his diseased appetite. Having her father's turn of mind, she procured works on scientific subjects, and read to him, herself, after the labors of the day were over, to save his failing eyesight. Beautiful in her care and devotion, she let no opportunity pass, in which she might show him how tenderly she loved, and how solicitous she was for him. Wrecked though he had nearly been, he still wore the remnant of his nobility bravely. As he sat there, the wind played gently with his thin white hair, and the careworn look habitual to him, was softened by the smiling curves of his lips.

Sarah no longer looked forward to the next ball as her only and highest anticipation of pleasure; it was enough for her that her father was restored to her after six years of almost hopeless dissipation. She had said to him only the night before, "father, why can we not make for ourselves a home? Colonel Leffingwell owns this house; suppose he gives

us an opportunity to purchase it. With such an object before us, it will be so pleasant to labor!"

"I can never consent to let you take this upon yourself," said her father; "but you shall help me, or I will help you."

Sarah looked with an inquiring eye at her father. The smile deepened on his lip.

"I have thought of an invention in which I am almost sure to succeed," he said.

The bright glance faded out of Sarah's face. It was his disappointment in an infringement upon a patent right of his, and for which his poverty prevented him from receiving justice by law, that had broken him down. Who can wonder that Sarah trembled as she looked back with fears and doubts. He noticed her downcast expression.

I know of what you are thinking, my child, but don't fear for me. After many nights of solemn communion with myself and my God, I have come to the deliberate conclusion that no power, no temptation, no disappointment,

shall ever lead me to that poison again. I have so decided, and I believe God will help me."

From that moment Sarah felt less fear, and is it to be wondered at, that the emotions of her heart, made her face so joyous on that serene Sabbath night? It was pleasant to think that as time rolled on they might have a hearth-stone of their own.

And what beautiful thoughts are connected with the home hearth-stone. Though the broad flags of the old fashioned fire-place are not, though the brush, and the cup of mixture with which the good wife was wont to "red up" the fire-place, are gone, perhaps, forever; yet is there not an ideal hearth-stone, "sacred to the memory," though departed from our sight? Can we not all look back to the dear, lighted rooms, where merry faces and thoughtful brows were gathered? The old grandmother is there, knitting in hand, the dear old saint, verging well on to ninety; ever ready with child-like smile and word of

encouragement. The grandfather, with knees crossed and hands folded, nods as he talks, till some burst of childish laughter sets his dim, blue eyes wide open again, when he smiles, pats the nearest rogue upon the head, and dozes again.

Babes are there, pure and loving; the calm-eyed mother is there; the grave father, looking with inward eyes upon a long, long panorama, stretching before him—the future of all those dear ones, *as he would have it.* It is the old, yet ever new, romance of the hearth-stone; the Mecca of the true poet's imagination; the well of refreshing, for the weary man of business; the spot sacred to the most hallowed loves, emotions, and prophesies of the heart; the beautiful garden in the desert: the cluster of palms and dates in the else barren waste of life.

It is, however, not only the happy family-circle numbering its members by the half score, that knows the blessing and beauty of the hearth-stone. We will take you to a lowly

cottage, where the vine grows over the wall, and roses bloom without and within, over the neat threshold, through the beautiful hall, and you will find a hearth-stone there, although there are but two to dwell before it. They are both in middle age, and they sit side by side under the clear light, whose jets proceed from long-drawn tubes and from dark avenues under the earth. They sit together; a book half closed rests on his knee, of which they are talking. No children have blessed their union; still are they happy, for they know that children are an "heritage of the Lord," and if he has withheld them, it is for some good purpose. So they lavish yet the more love upon each other, and thank God that they can have a hearth-stone, on which to erect an altar, before which to bow, and from which to dispense blessings and charities to the homeless and the needy, even if the sweet singing voices of little children are denied them.

And how happy Sarah and her father were, of late, before their little fire; you can tell

who have felt the hard smiting of the drunkard's curse against your heart, and then, all suddenly, have known the joy and peace of his recovered love, when the demon of strong drink has been put away forever.

"Father," said Sarah, "I will go in and get our supper, and then if you will spare me, perhaps, I had better run down to the tavern and sit with Hager till dark. Shall you be lonesome?"

"I will go with you, dear," said her father. She checked the exclamation of surprise that arose to her lips. She said not a word, but a dark dread came over her. He was going in the very midst of temptation; was he strong enough? Was the old love so crucified, that neither sense would open to its fascinations? She would not let him see that she doubted or feared, so she went within; but there was a tumult of thought and feeling that confused her. Perhaps Guilford Coit would be there; if so, a mute look would put him on his guard; he would talk with, and watch over, the old man.

The little table was presently spread. How neat and delicate it looked! Because there were but two, Sarah did not follow that mistaken policy of making things only convenient. It would have been as easy, perhaps easier, to let the table remain against the side of the wall; but would it look as well? Sarah decided not, and that nothing was worth having that was not the occasion of some trouble, be it ever so slight. It would certainly have been less expensive to use a common dark cloth; but Sarah reasoned rightly, when she said, "why should I let this fine linen, which was my mother's, lay in drawers to mould or to yellow, when it might give pleasure by its exquisite whiteness?" Therefore it was, that the daintiest princess might have eaten at that humble board. I do not remember that I have described Sarah Church. You may wish to know whether she was regal in stature, or fairy-like; whether her hair was like gold, or of deeper tint and shadings; but I prefer that you should determine how she was beau-

tiful, or if she was beautiful at all, in the progress of my story. And let me just hint, here, that a love of truth, a delicate regard for the feelings of others, a simplicity of speech, an inherent and noble modesty, a love for God and religion, a real regard for what is really virtuous, these constitute a beauty meritorious and worthy of possession. The sick bed will test it, but it will shine brighter there. Time, with its itching fingers, cannot steal it, for it is locked within a treasury that never yet, with such safeguards, was robbed; and it can be improved hour by hour, moment by moment, till it shall shine in the full glory of perfectness.

Stand before your mirror, there, maiden, with the plain features, and see if there are dark lines there, marked with discontent. Look closely within that eye, gentle, but perhaps neither dark nor brilliant; has no envy darkened its softness? Does harsh anger often curl the lips to scornful shape, or thoughtless and foolish words wreathe them in un-

meaning smiles? Does the hectic glow of passions unrestrained, mantle the cheeks; or has sullen disquietude stolen the gloss from the locks of banded hair? If none of these things have taken place, never fear for your plainness; the soul will take care that its beauty shall not be disregarded.

Supper over, and the little room put to rights again, Sarah and her father set out, not without some misgivings on her part. That Mr. Church was a fine looking old man was generally conceded, even when he was degraded by his habits; but to-night, spite of her fears, Sarah could not help stealing now and then a glance of pride at him, or, with a childish ingenuity, lingering behind ostensibly to pick some flower, really to see how well and straight and noble he looked; and to watch the sunlight, now fast travelling to the west, glitter on his white hair.

"These are beautiful, are they not?" asked Sarah, holding up a sprig of wild jessamine, and another of bergamot. "What are they

the emblems of, father—you know all about the flowers."

"Friendship, my dear," said her father, pausing a moment; "how natural and eloquent the language of the flowers is! an 'oratory,' as some one has well said, 'that speaks in perfumed silence, in which there are tenderness and passion, and even a buoyancy of gay mirthfulness, unknown to other vocabularies.'"

"Hager is so fond of flowers, the dear child," said Sarah compassionately, "I'll make her a bouquet, though I suppose, they keep her lavishly supplied from Colonel Leffingwell's hot-house. She always seemed to me like an exquisite little flower herself," she added, in a caressing voice.

The doctor's carriage stood before the tavern, and a little group was gathered talking with hushed voices.

"Something has happened, I'm afraid," said Sarah, as they hurried on; "what shall I do if little Hager is gone, without saying a word to me?"

A neighbor met her on the threshold.

"We all thought the last had come," she said, "but the doctor thinks she is better, now, and wont go to-night. As for poor Tristam, you could hear him all over the house. They've just gone down to the meadow-lot, (for he ran off there like a crazy man), to tell him. Dear, dear—how dreadful he takes on! As for her, dear lamb," the woman continued, "there she lay, and does yet, patient as an angel. Mr. Coit stays by her, just like a brother; she can't bear him out of her sight. She jest nestles up to him, and I expect that makes her father feel bad, for I don't think he likes the new agent any too well, or at least, he didn't. Dear me, don't I look like a fright in this old red shawl? but there! says my husband, 'they've sent for you up to Saint's,' and I almost knew what that meant, so I hurried off without stopping for dress, though to be sure—"

"What did Hager say?" queried Sarah,

cutting her short somewhat unceremoniously.

"Say? dear mercy! everything. But what do you think?—she asked her father if, whether she died or lived, he would let them get up a Sunday School in the hall, up stairs. He promised—'yes,' he said, 'anything, anything—only don't die, don't die, father's darling.' You ought to have heard him; it was enough to melt a heart of stone. I never thought that great strong man could have took on that way."

"Father, where will you stay, while I go up stairs?" asked Sarah.

Her look was so appealing, her manner so conscious, that the old man's pride took fire.

"Daughter, are you afraid to trust me, now?" he asked, reproof in his voice.

"No, no," she whispered; "forgive me. I will trust you, fully, wholly."

She left him, commending him, in her heart to God, and went up to Hager's room. I said up—it was but four or five steps from the lower hall into the bedroom, her mother had

occupied before. Sarah never needed to ask if her presence was welcome, so she moved in softly and saw a picture.

The upper part of the large bed, all white drapery, was lustred by the setting sun. It was no ordinary red that bathed pillow and folded hands and spiritual face, but a royal crimson of deepest splendor tinged with the richest bronzing of gold. Clear hues of carmine edged with a faint lustre, laid on the wall at the bed's head, and some distant reflection of shimmering water trembled in silvery, wavy lines between. For the moment it seemed an almost supernatural glory, not of earth, but of heaven, and Sarah stood transfixed with awe and admiration.

Hulda Saint was walking softly back and forth at some distance from the bedside, striving for that composure, that the fear of the shadow of death had so ruthlessly broken in upon; the doctor was placing a written prescription within the hands of the nurse. Guilford Coit, half in that wondrous light that

faded as mists fade into clear atmosphere, sat by the head of the bed, reading in a very low and very soft voice, some portions of the Psalms.

"Doctor," said Hager, as she saw him preparing to leave, and her voice was clear and sweet as that of a child, "I want you to come here a moment."

The physician moved around on the other side.

"Doctor, do you think I can possibly live a week?" she asked, smiling.

"You may live, several," he answered.

"If I take any particular care, or nourishment; will that prolong my life?" she asked again, anxiously.

"Your life depends upon nothing of that kind," he replied; "the only thing is to keep as free from excitement as possible."

"Doctor, I want to ask you a question, and you must say yes," she added earnestly. "If I can't live, and you have said I can't, will you let them take me down to the river? I want to be baptized."

"No," said the doctor, shortly, "that would be little less than suicide."

She answered cheerfully, though her lips quivered, "I am sure that Christ would take care of me. He is here, something good and pure, strong and holy, is here; it makes me feel as if *His* arms were upholding me. And He will take care of me if I go down into the water."

"But what difference will it make, child?"

"Doctor, I want all the world to see," she said with a lovely smile; "I want all Clifton Locks to know that I publicly profess Christ. The mill girls will all be there—those who have so often joined me in the dance, will be there. I love them all. I want them to see that there is no gloom in religion. It's not dark, this dying; why, doctor, I feel just as if there was a great palace, filled with music, just before, a glorious palace, whose doors are opening for me. Doctor, you must say, yes."

"I cannot say yes; such excitement as that would be death."

"Please call Mr. Coit," she said childishly. He came.

"Do you say, too, that I must not go into the water?" she asked, laying her little palm in his.

"Not yet, darling; it's not best now," he said in his grave way.

"But I dreamed, I went down, and two bright angels came up with me. The water fell all about them, in such beautiful colors; and my robe seemed covered with precious stones."

"God will accept you just the same, you know."

"O! yes;" but a sigh followed.

"I'll tell you what we will do, little one; we'll have Christian service here, and you shall hear it all. Wont that be next best?"

"Perhaps so," she said quietly. "Mr. Coit, would it please you, to have me get well?"

"Hager, darling," he cried almost passionately, "God knows, it would be the happiest day of my life."

"And if I die—you never, *never* will forget me."

"Forget you;" he turned from the saintly little face—a quick, heavy sob sounded upon the still air; his chest heaved mightily, a shiver ran through his frame. Controlling himself, he was calm again; as he looked down upon her, great tears making a heavy mist before his eyes. "My little Hager—you know I could not forget you, who are the first fruits of my mission." Sarah, who had been seated near, arose to leave the room. Someway, everything looked dim and clouded to her, even Hager's beautiful face.

That evening, she said to her father, quietly, her face was much paler than usual, "I think, father, if Hager had lived, Mr. Coit would have made her his wife."

"Ah!" the old man looked up, then went at his tools again; "it might be. Hager was always a sweet child; a precious, affectionate little creature, and hers a face unlike all the others. I used to think Saint wouldn't keep

her long. So you think, young Coit likes her."

"Yes, I do;" and with an imperceptible sigh, Sarah drew up her little stand, and commenced sewing.

At that moment, the mill agent was pacing his own room, with hurried steps. Occasionally, in a low, tremulous whisper, might be heard the words,

"The dearest idol I may have,
Whate'er that idol be;
Help me to tear it from thy throne
And worship only Thee."

CHAPTER XVI.

A DAY IN THE WOODS.

COLONEL LEFFINGWELL gave a party in the woods that week. When Hager heard of it, her eye brightened.

"You will go, Mr. Coit, and enjoy it all you can, for me and yourself, too. You don't know what good times they have out in the green woods; oh! you can't think how they do enjoy themselves!"

Guilford looked with a swelling heart down upon the little figure, so helpless, so unselfish! Not a thought for herself save that she wished him to have a double portion of pleasure by enjoying it for her. He saw how much it delighted her, so he made no vain excuses, only said,

"To be sure I will go, little Hager, if you wish me to, and I will come home with a budget of news.

"Thank you, and tell Miss Mary how pleasant her visit seemed; I didn't talk much when she was here, but I felt grateful; and say the flowers she sent keep fresh."

The mill girls flew back and forth at intervals to whisper of the anticipated pleasure. Teams were decorated with flags; teams went loaded from the Colonel's to the grounds, five miles off, where there was a waterfall, and unrivalled scenery; teams carried music and tables and flowers, and finally the merry company, by tens and twenties, and even forties.

O! the open country, the glorious, God-made country! To live within sight of a field with its carpet of emerald, is a luxury. How much more to view broad acres of infinite variety, to rove with satisfied gaze from the comely swell of the hill to the beautiful level of the meadow, touched here and there by the light-springing birds, while the sweet hay-cocks, the loosened tresses of the earth, changing from yellow to brown, throw off odors as of precious oils.

And then the trees, singly and in families, those dumb but animate things, whispering in language known only by the winds, stretching off for miles toward the sea and toward the farther country. Their leaves sparkle in the sunshine, their branches overshadow the roofs of humble homes; their fruits fall into the dimpled hands of children, their beauty causes hearts to be unconsciously glad; and God made them graceful, so that in all their motions they speak of an unchangeable love.

Then there are the sparkling blue streams, lying in green basins, and margined with low, dreamy alders; and still farther beyond, the salt sea, like a purple-blue mist, with its ships, that the distance purples also, heaving its glittering waves against shore and keel, bearing great freights and glad tidings over its mighty bosom.

"O! these glorious views of the free, unlimited country!" thought Guilford as, seated upon his perch, in a great farm hay-cart, beside the driver, he overlooked the grand

stretches of God's wonderful limning; "how they enlarge the soul! One grows kindred with the bounteous earth, till a resting place, even in its darkest corners, seems a pleasant thing. In spite of the narrowing influences, and despot circumstances, in spite of the ills of flesh, the troubles of poverty, the carking cares of life, death and decay, the contemplation of these innumerable works of Deity infuses buoyancy, hope, and the love of the everlasting Father in the soul, till even the frame seems etherealized, and heaven begun on earth."

And it is even so in every experience. The very stones glistening upon the hill-sides speak of peace. The cattle, deep in the grass, seem mutely to acknowledge that God has placed them upon a thousand hills.

Hark! That exquisite trill that gives such finish to the warble of the forest-bird, speaks the mechanism of the same creative hand. The corn enriched with tassels of gold; the butterfly flashing its many colored wings in the midst

of the leaves; the tinted flowers of carnation, of royal purple, of princely yellow; the apples just turning from russet to red—every orchard a mine of wealth and beauty; the barberries, like jewels of flame and drops of amber—all these fill the soul to the brim with love and admiration.

"If this depth and purity of atmosphere," again thought Guilford, "if these riches of color and harmonies of shape, these sweets of fruits and transparencies of pebbly streams, these clear breathings of the winds, and lofty breadths of sky and sea, could from some alembic be poured into our human hearts, what harmonies would play along our lives! Then, as the shadows that fall upon the hill-sides only add a varied loveliness, so would it be with us as the shadows of time touched us with their shifting hues; always gliding, always making new shapes of beauty; always reflections from that which is in the heavens above, and not of the earth beneath."

"There are the groves! what a beautiful

place!" cried the glad voices, as the wagons were speedily emptied. Soon dispersing, the merry company moved about now under the shadows of the trees, and now on broad patches of sun-lighted grass. Swings were up, platforms arranged, and only mirth and happiness seemed universal there. Colonel Leffingwell, in the goodness of his heart, had provided with a liberal hand. He had also made arrangements for the town poor who were able to go. They were carried in a wagon with easy springs. Wrinkled faces seemed youthful again with smiles; pain and care were chased away or forgotten.

Mrs. Leffingwell went in an easy carriage. She appeared to have taken a new lease of life; there was no repining, no petulance; and the calmness with which now she looked on things that would once have irritated beyond forbearance, had operated most favorably upon her health. She was still a confirmed invalid, but thanks to the religion of Christ, a more patient one. A pretty little tent had

been erected for her accommodation, and there, on entering, she found her daughter Mary, and several friends, visitors at Rose Hedge.

"You see, mother, we have made a nice couch for you," said her daughter, pointing to a high heaped mound of dried mosses, covered with shawls and blankets. "I sent the men to gather the moss, and now you have a chance for rest."

The tent was ornamented with roses, and evergreen hung in festoons from side to side.

"That was Mr. Coit's work," said Maud Mary, pointing to the graceful hangings.

"Every thing he does, is well done," said Mrs. Leffingwell. "I never saw his equal."

"He needs some friends," said the young girl, demurely, "for he is not a very popular man. I liked him, till he made his opinions so conspicuous; but now I think he is self-righteous."

"O! my child, he is one of the humblest of God's creatures," said Mrs. Leffingwell.

"I don't look upon him in that light," said Mary; "neither does papa. He's dreadfully afraid we shall have dancing, I understand, and I've ordered it particularly, because he protests against it."

Mrs. Leffingwell looked grieved for a moment; then she said sadly, "my child, I fear I can never undo what I have done—I must leave you with God."

"Don't fear but what I shall do well enough, mother," said Mary lightly, that strange spirit of rebellion that operates so powerfully upon every heart, rising up at her mother's words. "Merric and you can enjoy these things, you know, since he is going to be a minister."

"Merric a minister!" exclaimed Mrs. Leffingwell in astonishment.

"Yes, a parson. All I know about it is, that he is willing to relinquish his brilliant prospects for a country school-house, and boarding round, or standing up, at the best, in a pine board meeting-house, and thumping

the Bible. I don't see why he need become a fanatic all at once; he isn't so very wicked, and never has been."

At this time Mary Leffigwell was alone with her mother, their friends having left the tent to ramble about.

"My child how do you know this?"

"Because I overheard my father talking with him. 'If that is your decision,' he said, 'If you will forego the prospects which I have pointed out to you, and study for the ministry, you and I must go different ways.'"

"And what did Merric say?" asked Mrs. Leffingwell, her cheeks crimson with excitement.

"'I hope you wont oppose me, father; if you do, still I must be about my chosen work; these are my clearest convictions.' Father then walked towards the door and I hurried away."

"My God, I thank thee," was the inmost grateful expression of the invalid's heart, but she said nothing. Mary, after seeing her

comfortably seated, went out at her request, to join the gay company, while the mother felt not alone with the beautiful conviction that her son, like herself, was a disciple of the blessed Saviour. Yes, Mrs. Leffingwell was a Christian. The resolve had been made in one of her hours of utter gloom, that she would throw all upon the mercy of Christ, and find happiness that would never fail her. Not without many and fierce struggles did the soul, bound hand and foot as it were in the fashions and frivolities of life, come up like the sheeted Lazarus, out of the tomb of its unbelief, and through God's grace walk forth a new being to see new life and new beauty clothing even the very grass of the fields, and smiling from the trees. It was the work of many days. It was compassed by much anguished pleading, by a true repentance. It was sealed by Christ, and in openly professing her love to Him, before her family, she had made such a commotion as years of worldliness and fashion had never seen there before.

CHAPTER XVII.

A NEW FEATURE.

THE large company divided according to their several tastes. Some of the more reckless young men and women had walked nearly a mile to have games of ninepins in a bowling alley at that distance. Others enjoyed the swinging and the simple plays in which Guilford Coit was the leader. He was in demand everywhere. Genuine happiness made his face beam so that its kindliness was a card of recommendation even to the little children, and it was "oh! Mr. Coit, do this, oh, Mr. Coit, can't you make up something that we can play?" and he entered into the spirit of the thing, seeming like a child himself. Colonel Leffingwell saw him leading the games, heard his merry shout, and care-free laugh, loudest of all, and said to himself, while his brow grew dark, "this man is inexplicable."

At whatever turn one might come upon, somebody was revelling in the enjoyments of the day. Father Goldby, with his band of halt and lame sauntered or sat together, and it was affecting to hear the old people talk of their former days. "When I was young," was the string upon which they all harped; some pathetically, others ludicrously, others again with a quiet zest and relish that gave token that their hearts were young yet.

Sarah Church and her father were now and then seen through the emerald vistas, she hanging lovingly on his arm, and very proud of him. In one of his rambles Guilford met them.

"You see I have not been idle," said Sarah, handing a list from which he read the names of twenty who had promised to join in forming a Sabbath School.

"That is very encouraging," he said; "how it will cheer the heart of our little Hager." Mr. Hanfort came along. He walked with his face down, his hands folded behind him.

"I suppose you have heard of the good work," said Guilford, cheerfully.

"O! I beg your pardon, sir," said the man, with a startled air, "what work do you refer to?"

Guilford stated the matter to him.

"I am glad to hear it," said Mr. Hanfort, though he spoke with a gloomy voice. "Save the young, sir, save the young," he said solemnly, and passed on, still with his head bent, still with his hands behind him.

"Poor man!" said Sarah, pityingly, "he can't get over the dreadful death of his son. I understand that he has since received fresh proofs of the fact." In another moment, almost before they knew it, Mr. Hanfort was at their side again, his head more erect, his arms folded before him.

"Mr. Coit," he exclaimed, and his voice even, had changed, "what can I do for Clifton Locks?"

"My dear sir," said Guilford, laying a hand upon his arm, "what *cannot* you do for

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Clifton Locks? With a few liberal Christian men, we could revolutionize Clifton Locks, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Hanfort, the gloom clearing somewhat from his face. "I feel as if I wanted a work to do. I have mourned long enough over the fate of my poor boy. Sir, it has led me to come back, and take up my unfulfilled duties; it has raised the altar in my family; it has bruised my man-fearing spirit, and humbled me to the dust; it has taught me to be more regardful of my family. But, oh! sir, I cannot banish the terrible conviction that my poor boy's death lays at my door. As I passed you just now, some good spirit whispered to me, tell him so. Work with him for the regeneration of all these souls; do your duty to them as a man and a Christian, and God may be merciful to him! It may be a foolish impression, pass that by, but tell me just what I can do for Clifton Locks."

"My dear friend, the fields are all white

unto the harvest," said Guilford, his heart swelling with new joy. "Look upon them," and he pointed to the throngs on every hand; "we can make a second Paradise of Clifton Locks, it is so beautiful! yes, it needs only the active, living spirit of God in these young hearts, to make it a heaven on earth."

The sad face of Mr. Hanfort brightened.

"I thank God that you ever came here, Mr. Coit," he said, holding out his hand.

"And I, too," said Guilford, humbly, with no vain attempt at parrying what some might call a high compliment, "if I may but be the means in His hands of doing any one any good."

"What a rare character," whispered Mr. Church aside to his daughter.

"I will see and talk with you further," Mr. Hanfort said, holding out his hand again, and grasping that of the agent warmly; "this has been on my mind, more or less, for some days."

"Well, Sarah, you see the little leaven is

working," Guilford remarked, as he passed her; "God will yet reign in Clifton Locks."

The young man moved forward—he saw the Colonel's gardener, who was creeping along under a great weight of evergreen branches.

"How are you, Jack?"

"Bless God, well and happy, sir," the man replied; "but Mr. Merric is been looking for you a long while, sir."

"Where is he, Jack?"

"Just yonder by the tent, him and Mr. Austin, together. He's been talking powerful to Mr. Austin, sir; bless God, he's got hold of his heart, sir."

"I'll hurry to him; but where are you carrying all this trimming?"

"To the tables, sir. The mill-hands, they are going to fit up a sort of bower for Miss Mary, sir."

"That's right," said Guilford, and hurried in the direction of his friend. He found him alone, walking backward and forward. As

soon as he saw the agent, his face brightened. He hastened to meet him. "The die is cast," he said; "I have come out from the world."

"I am very glad," exclaimed Guilford, his voice trembling with emotion.

"Yes, three years, if you will believe me, I have been fighting off the conviction that God requires my heart. I had a class-mate at college, who died about my age, one of the loveliest of Christians. He was ever urging me to accept the Saviour. Is it not strange that at times you have resembled him so much that it seemed as if he spoke through you? I loved him; I would almost have given my life to save him, and yet I would not give to God that which was already his own, by creation, even though I knew what comfort it would afford him on his dying bed."

"Thank God! it is not too late," whispered Guilford.

"I do thank God," was the reply; "thank Him that He counts me worthy to suffer,

for—my father has all but disowned me. He says he will not see me through college if I hold such views; that he will not aid me in any way; that I can have my choice, my father's home and a lucrative profession, backed by strong influence, or poverty, struggle and exile. He was very harsh, yesterday, and has not spoken to me since; even Mary seems cold to me to-day, and I have shrank from speaking to my mother, for it is doubtful how she would receive it."

"With joy and thanksgiving," said Guilford.

"Are you sure of it?"

"I am quite sure of it," was the reply.

"Then I shall not be a stranger in my father's house."

"Neither there nor in Clifton Locks," replied Guilford, fervently; "I tell you there is going to be a great work in this town. When such men as Mr. Hanfort come forward, and of their own accord, cry out 'what shall I do for Clifton Locks?' it is the sign that harvest is near."

"Did he? Did that cold professor ask that question?"

"He both asked it, and meant it," said Guilford. "If he wants work, be sure there is enough ready to his hands. But what will you do?"

"God will direct," replied Merric, straightening his youthful figure, a glow of holy enthusiasm kindling his face; "isn't it good to trust in Him?"

"Yes, and to feel there is no possible danger in loving Him too well, in concentrating our energies too wholly and fixedly upon Him. Earthly objects may excite our fondness, our idolatry to a dangerous extent, but the heavenly, the imperishable—God—all and in all—mighty, as He is, He stoops to our poor hearts, and we may worship without fear of stint. Yes, you say bravely. None ever trusted Him in vain. You must go through college."

"And I shall; my faith is strong."

"We will find a way," said Guilford cheer-

fully, "even if the Colonel should deny you the house, you know where to come."

"Most assuredly," was the reply; "but I trust my father would not proceed to such measures. I have been talking with Austin Grande," he added, willing to change the subject. "Grande is a good fellow, but bitter, bitter in his views of religion."

"Yes," replied Guilford, "so bitter that he will not stay there long; he will come out of doubting castle."

"I am glad to hear you say that," said Merric.

"Look here—Coit—Leffingwell," shouted a familiar voice.

They turned, it was Austin Grande himself, his cheeks heated by exercise.

"We're going to have a jollier time than we bargained for," he cried, coming toward them, breathing hard. Throwing the thick curls from his wet forehead; "Guess what, if you can."

"Dancing," suggested Guilford. Austin sneered a little.

"What made that come into your brain, I wonder?" he queried half impatiently. "No, we've had dancing; been to the other end of the grove, to get out of the way of you Puritans. But I'll tell you what it is, we're going to have a genuine, old fashioned clam-bake."

"A clam bake, here?" said Merric, incredulously.

"Yes; your father met a man with a load, bought the whole lot, hired man, team and everything; so they've gone to work down here. It would do you good to have a sniff at the air in that direction. It is odorous of salt-hay, burning weeds and shell-fish. Want to go over?"

Guilford and Merric, concluded that they did. Groups were already on their way to the scene of excitement. To most it was an entirely new thing. They crowded the piny leaves aside, and their feet sank in the soft moss, while laughing voices, twittering birds, the music in the branches overhead, the shrill, distant whistle and hallo, added a

pleasant exhilaration. They passed the tables, already spread with white, and arched at the head with evergreen boughs. The scent of the woods came fresher as they advanced; the clatter of dishes, and breaking of ice, and odor of viands and tea and coffee, cooking over forest fires in the open air. White dresses flitted in and out among the trees, youthful faces smiled at them, the bland breeze touched their temples lovingly.

At last they came within sight of the novel view—a huge mound of hot sand and smouldering weeds, mosses and branches. Men were already at work throwing aside, with long shovels constructed out of pine branches and boards, rudely put together, the smoking shelfish. The Colonel himself appeared, hurrying round on all sides—his face flushed, giving orders here and there, directing, questioning and deciding.

"They are taking out corn," said Guilford, as the steaming ears, well wrapped in their husks, were thrown on the grass.

"And fish!" exclaimed Merric, in amaze.

"You see the facts of the case are these," said Austin. "The men had contracted to furnish a great bake up in Milford, but they said on a pinch they could provide the things, and take them there late to-night, if the Colonel would give them their price. Of course he put down the cash, and they were in no wise loth. The materials will be fresher for Milford, and it don't matter to these men if they do sit up all night, for the sake of a speculation. It's a money-making delay for them."

"Now came the fish, well wrapped in brown paper, smelling deliciously of the sea. Great buckets of clams, gaping and luscious, were carried off steaming to the tables; and from the corn gathered in heaps, hundreds of dozens were taken, still in their clinging envelopes, leaving behind the great smoking mass from which belched now and then thick puffs of flame.

Presently there was a great ringing of bells,

a mighty clamor—the signal for dinner. Everybody was hungry. Exercise and the fresh air had given them appetites that a city denizen might envy. Already the aged and infirm were seated. Colonel Leffingwell led the blushing Mary to her beautiful ornamented seat, Mrs. Leffingwell preferring to dine in her little tent, and Merric deciding to keep her company. Guilford and Austin were placed near the Colonel, Guilford observing with sorrow that the latter had caused bottles of champagne to be set on the table near him.

One of the young ladies, a visitor at the Colonel's, had professed to take a singular interest in Guilford. Being a woman of considerable ability, she had more than once argued with him upon different subjects, but invariably ended in being a more of a listener than a controversialist. She had arranged in some way to be seated by the side of Guilford, and opposite Austin, so that in conversation she could command them both. For a

while it was a busy time, passing, helping, changing plates and refreshments, but Miss Chesney had managed to find a theme on which she was enlarging to a lady on her right. Presently she turned to Guilford.

"Well, Mr. Coit," she remarked, carelessly, "what do you think; is there such a thing as an innocent flirtation?"

"Yes," he replied, "provided there was ever an innocent theft, or a harmless murder."

"O! you take it too seriously," she said, after a momentary surprise.

"I am perfectly serious in what I say," he replied. "One can bear to be cheated by a cloth-merchant or a grocer, though the transaction merits unlimited contempt; but to be deceived by the lips and eyes, the smiles and the speech of young hearts that God has made to give love and consolation, makes wounds that even time cannot heal. Heaven only knows," he continued, with earnestness, "how many heart-hardened men walk the earth, soured and unhappy—finding falsehood

everywhere, looking crookedly upon all creatures of harmony, seeing distortion in every thing, because their natures have been warped by some cruel deception—such a thing, perhaps, as you would call an innocent flirtation, commenced in sport, but ending in anguish, to one, at least. Like the melted iron, glowing and rich, these men might have been shaped to forms of enduring beauty; but the sledge-hammer of deception came down, flattened and twisted, and left them cold, black, shapeless masses."

"You are eloquent, Mr. Coit," said the lady, not yet prepared for a refutation.

"The nature of the subject is such that I talk earnestly and feelingly, for I believe that the victim of a flirt, in proportion to his singleness of nature, his wholesome and implicit faith in his kind, his generous, unwarped sense of justice, and the breadth and depth of his love, oftentimes becomes the more morose, unyielding, woman-hating man. And many such *do* marry from prudential motives, after

the fatal change, and lead their wives most unhappy lives."

"Ah! but you know young and inexperienced girls are not the only flirts in the world, Mr. Coit."

"Yes, I do know it," he returned, with deeper tones and a kindling eye; "shame that I must say it, and to their absolute and eternal disgrace, be it spoken, some married women are flirts. Not even the sacredness of the vows they have taken upon them, the trust which their husbands confide in them, nor the opinion of the world will deter them from the satanic love of vanity and misrule. Not even the babes, whose soft eyes rebuke them at every glance, and whose innocence is a continual prayer for their unworthy mothers, can wake them to a realization of the precipice on whose brink they stand swaying to a fall."

"Excuse me, Coit," said Austin, "but allow me to ask, did you never think of taking orders? A capital clergyman was lost in you."

"Perhaps so," said Guilford, quietly smiling, "although I have not only taken orders, but I try to obey orders," he added.

"You do not overlook the fact, I hope, that our sex are not the only offenders," said Miss Chesney, diligently cutting away at an ear of corn; "there are some men who flirt."

"And I'll tell you what I think of them," said Coit, in a lower voice: "They are suicides, strangling the spiritual within them; they are theives, stealing trust and confidence from the hearts that shelter them with honest love; they are counterfeits, passing for genuine the smiles they lavish; they are liars, bartering their *truth* and *honor* for a shallow favor; they are murderers, striking virtue to the earth. They combine, in short, a variety of every sin, every rank defilement under heaven."

"Mercy on me, Mr. Coit, you are very severe," said the young lady, "you don't leave a loop-hole for them to defend themselves."

"They cannot defend themselves," was the reply.

"Coit, just this once you will take a little champagne," said the hearty voice of Colonel Leffingwell. "Miss Mary requests it as a personal favor."

Guilford's face grew red; he loved approbation, he disliked to be singular. Many eyes were fastened upon him; Austin's in particular seemed to say, "if you throw aside this excessive singularity, and be more like other folks, I shall think better of your profession."

"I am obliged to Miss Leffingwell for her politeness," he said, in a somewhat constrained voice. "I am very certain she will overlook my refusal when I say that it is one of my fixed principles never to taste wine under any consideration."

"Coit, you are almost a saint;" said the Colonel, with a sneer that was satanic.

The agent's lips grew white, and for one instant quivered with indignation. By the merciful interposition of God, as he afterwards said, he was enabled to overlook this insult. The impulse was to throw back, as the world

might call it, a manly defiance, and stalk from the table, but he remembered that Christ bore meekly the imprecations of his enemies; he seemed to see for a moment the little pallid figure of Hager between white curtains, and there came a grief to his soul that quelled all rashness, and enabled him to conquer himself.

The Colonel turned quickly to Austin Grande.

"I am not in the habit of indulging in wine, but I have too much respect for Miss Leffingwell to refuse so kind an invitation," the latter said with a gallant manner, and a side look at Guilford as full of evil as the Colonel's voice.

"Austin, for my sake, forbear," whispered Guilford, his lips growing pale again.

The answer was a defiant laugh, and the glass was tossed off with a reckless grace. The wine was the strongest, Austin's head the weakest; the subtle fire mounted to the brain, and played generously among the heart-strings, inducing a brilliant delirium, for it

was his first glass, but, sad to say through that day at least, not his last.

When they arose from the table some went back to their sports, others sallied to the river, not far off, for the purpose of boating, and Guilford had made up his mind to return, when Merric joined him.

"I have had such a glorious talk with mother," he said, smiling, "though it cuts me to the heart to see my father's altered manner. He has not spoken to me to-day."

"Where is Mrs. Leffingwell?" queried Guilford.

"Just put her in the carriage," was Merric's reply; "She was very much fatigued, and thought it best to go home at once. What a treasure I have found in her, she who was so different. What! you are not going already!"

"I am anxious about little Hager," said Guilford.

"You needn't be; I heard from her half an hour ago."

"You did! by whom, pray?"

"One of the wagon-men; father sent him to the tavern for something, and he saw her. He said Hager told him to bring word to you that she was very comfortable, that you need not hurry home."

"Dear child!" murmured Guilford, "I had rather be there than here, but perhaps it would grieve her if I returned."

"Let us go to the river," Merric suggested. I know where there's a fine place for a bath, out of sight of the boating; come, it will be a grand finale to this glorious day."

Guilford walked along with him. They formed a pleasant contrast; Guilford, dark and somewhat sombre of countenance, Merric with boyish curls, blue eyes and a bright, healthful color in his cheeks.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DROWNED.

"I AM disinclined for bathing," said Guilford, as they came in sight of the river, flowing over smooth stones, and walled in on one side by a mass of loosely piled rocks, some six feet high. The rich coloring of nature tinged this stony barrier, the green and gray mosses coated with spotted layers of crimson, deep arches, broad flags of yellow and long reaches of vivid sea-green. The boats were already in use, being paddled in among the snow-like leaves of the water-lily. Girls with uncovered heads sat in them plashing the water with idle hands, some drawing up the long velvety strings or stems of the lilies. Singing and shouting voices sounded near and far; the sunlight came in pencilled lines, curving and braided, between the thin willow branches.

"Go and take your bath, Merric," said Guilford, "I'll wait here. When you come back, maybe we'll go boating too."

"I wish you would come," Merric, replied; "but since you wont, why, I hope you'll enjoy yourself. I need the refreshment; I am accustomed to it."

He went away on this. Guilford walked slowly back and forth enjoying everything; his own mind, for had he not conquered himself? the beautiful scene before, around him, all animated nature. Soon the sounds of gay laughter grew fainter, the boats floated off and away, the river lay before him, its flaggy sides quietly rippling against the pebbly bank.

Guilford stood still, lost in pleasant thought. His arms were folded, there was a smile on his lips and in his dark eyes a dreamy light. He knew not that he was overlooked, that the Colonel's daughter had just paused not far off and was regarding him with a curious eye. Presently she walked slowly forward, picking up here and there a shell or a bit of moss.

Her nearness startled him when he looked—he smiled surprisedly—bowed.

"My brother was with you a moment ago, I thought," she said.

"He was; he is near here now, bathing. What a beautiful spot this is, Miss Leffingwell."

"Yes, very beautiful. Father found it here, completely hidden by trees; he had them cleared away." She looked aside a moment, colored painfully, seemed struggling with herself, and finally said in a hesitating voice,

"Mr. Coit, I was very rude to ask you to take wine at the dinner. I hope you will overlook it."

"Don't mention it, Miss Mary," said the agent, pleasure and surprise brightening his face. "I assure you I can take no credit to myself; it was hard to do my duty to-day. Why are you not out boating?"

"My father cautioned me against it. He had a fearful dream some days ago, and since then he has been unwilling that I should go

on the water again. Father is somewhat superstitious; would you think it, Mr. Coit?"

Guilford smiled a little. He was thinking how people who have no anchor to lean upon, catch at straws.

"I don't know but I should, Miss Mary; people of his gay, joyous temperament have more forebodings than is generally suspected."

"Is there no hope at all of little Hager Saint's recovery?" asked the young lady, after a silence of some moments.

"None in the least," replied Guilford, his face growing very grave. "The little saint!" he added in a lower voice.

"I always liked her," said Mary, looking down.

"She was worthy of love," replied Guilford, his eye unconsciously measuring the long distance to the nearest boat. "I shall never forget her; I think—thought when I first saw her, that she has one of the purest faces I ever beheld. Now that suffering has spiritu-

alized it much more, she seems almost an inhabitant of heaven sojourning on earth for a little time."

"How patient she is!"

"Yes, Christianly patient," responded Guilford. "Ah! Miss Leffingwell, you and I both know, perhaps, what a sick bed is, unsanctified by religion. When Christ supports the fainting form, oh! how changed the aspect of all things! Hager without Christ, might still present a sweet image of patience, but with Him she is able not only to bear, but to triumph in suffering."

"Mr. Coit," said Maud, in a low voice, there had been another long pause, "you are of course aware of the change in my brother's views."

"Yes, he told me to-day," was the reply.

"If by any means you can influence my father," she said, and hesitated.

"God's grace alone can do that," he replied; "but I shall leave no means untried to effect a reconciliation."

"Father has threatened to draw himself entirely from him—and—I was going to say, that—in case—if it should really come to that, you know—I shall feel it a privilege to aid my dear brother. This I can do in the best way, perhaps, by giving you this draft," and she held towards him a check of five hundred dollars.

Miss Leffingwell!" he exclaimed. She changed color under his steady look.

He was disappointed—delighted.

"I have a perfect right to do what I please with it," she said quietly, though she trembled. "It is a gift from my father, and he never questions me about the use to which I put my money"—she started, "did some one call me?"

"I thought I heard a shout," replied Guilford, still holding the check, still too bewildered to know what to decide. "The boats are coming; we hear the voices from them."

"No, no!" she grew pale, "there it is!—a cry! can it be my brother? Mr. Coit, can it

be Merric! in danger! Which way? where is he? oh! tell me!"

"Take this till I see," said Guilford, giving her the check and starting off in the direction of the sound. Yes, there was no mistaking that appalling cry, the fearful, anguished, moaning shriek of a sinking man. The boats were drawing faster, impelled by the sound; Guilford Coit flew like an arrow, while Maud sinking against a tree, wrung her hands in helpless anguish, then started to follow him.

CHAPTER XIX.

A RESTORATION.

THE place chosen by Merric, in which to bathe, was a retired spot, where the shore took an inward curve, and for some yards the gravelly ground shelved down gradually into deep water. It was hidden by stretches of land, thickly grown with trees from the main body of the river, and reached by a long bend. This was the only place where the course of the river was so far inshore, and the sweep so abrupt.

Merric had gone down at first, not intending more than to take a hurried bath, but the invigorating effect of the water, which, being shaded, was icy cold, tempted him to swim, and he was soon luxuriating in the blue depths at some distance from the land.

Idly floating, half singing to himself, he lay

there, when suddenly he felt his limbs drawn strangely together and his strength forsake him. He essayed to strike out, but in vain. A paralytic's arms would have been as much help as were his at that awful time. He attempted still to float, but the spasms seemed to throw his limbs involuntarily, and he found himself sinking.

Then he uttered his first cry. It was very hard to perish thus in his youth, to tread alone these deep depths and no friendly hand near; to feel the cold waters engulph him as it were forever. Once more, and yet again, the shriek of mortal anguish sounded, then the struggles became fainter, the trembling heart took hold of God; the fair white face upturned and just discernable, the fair hair spread out like the tangled meshes of the golden-hearted lilies, the eyes wild and yet tender, uplifted for the last time, these the pitying, yet perhaps triumphing angels saw, and they only.

The dread roaring that had confused his

soul, as of pent up waters in resounding caves, hurling themselves against a thousand rocky points, had subsided; the gentle flow of the waters sounded like tinkling melodies that poured gratefully into his ears. The sky seemed bending close above him, and gates of clouded pearl and colors of splendor dazzled his failing vision. He was not alone, soft voices, harmonies of more than earthly beauty, faces so sweet and joyous that his gaspings seemed for delights he could not express, these were with him. There was no terror now, no fear of the cold depths; how could there be? When Guilford reached the spot he saw afar off only a few faint ripples. He shouted as he threw by his upper garments. There was no answering sound. Then plunging in he shouted again to the boats; he could hear their oars.

On, on he went. Desperation lent new strength to his arm; the waters were hurled in thick clouds of spray in every direction. The boats had made their appearance.

"Stand by," shouted Guilford, making a line of the slow circle, "look over the sides."

On the shores were gathered the terrified women. Colonel Leffingwell stood among them, his gray locks in disorder, as he gave commands or uttered hoarse shouts. Now here, now there, his arms tossed wildly, offering rewards to those who could swim (for he could not,) begging Guilford for the love of God to save his child, his only boy, the glory of his old age.

Poor father! what would he have given to recall the past day when his harsh words cut that young heart like a sword; how he watched every motion of Guilford, who, straining and panting, utterly forgetful of self, swept the waters in wide swathes, watching for the least indication of the whereabouts of his friend.

Suddenly he disappeared. Had he gone too? No, there was no commotion in the boats. O! what a time it seemed! those on shore scarcely drew breath; Mary was

crouching on the ground moaning bitterly, with dry eyes. The glad sun, the glad sky, the feast, the frolic were all forgotten; it was night in those souls.

Suddenly there was a shout. Guilford appeared; had he dragged up something with him? O! yes; the shuddering sight saw the long, dripping hair, and a groan of horror burst forth as, lifting it higher, the arms swayed helplessly. They drew it in the boat, they laid it down like a dead thing. Guilford wearily climbed by his side, and the rowers bent to their oars.

The boat's keel grated. "Thank God!" Guilford said, when he found them setting fire to piled brushwood. The tent also had been hastily brought along and arranged, blankets and everything available for warmth, some kind and thoughtful heart had sent, none other than Sarah, who, with the aid of her father, had made all things ready.

What a sob it was that smote the atmosphere when they took the body out. No

signs of life, dead arms hanging and swaying, dead eyes wide open; the water pouring yet in torrents. Colonel Leffingwell alone was silent. His lips were closed as if they were stone; he neither spoke nor wept, but with a look of self-accusation, inexpressibly awful, he took the body in his strong embrace, and bore it into the tent.

"He is dead," he said, laying it down, with another of those harsh, dry sobs; "he—is —dead!"

"I don't know about that," said old Mr. Church as he proceeded to detect some signs of life. None whatever appeared.

"Let him be taken home," said the Colonel.

"No, sir," exclaimed the old man, with energy, "not till I do my best to save him. Give me the hot bottles, and leave me alone with him and Mr. Coit. I have all the articles necessary for use in such cases. Do not send word to the house this six hours, for I promise you I shall not give him up till then."

Reluctantly the old Colonel left the tent

and dispersed the crowd, first sending some one to Rose Hedge to watch that the dreadful news was not communicated to his wife. He had no faith in the restoration, and as he was left with his daughter, he raved with the most frightful imprecations. Mary could not calm him, but she remained near him, walking when he walked, and when he flung himself to the ground, kneeling beside him.

It was now three o'clock, and the party were to remain till six. But all inclination for pleasure had deserted the rudest and most desperate. Colonel Leffingwell had made himself, by his frank good nature, his kindness to the people, and the interest he took in their welfare, almost an idol. Merric, in natural graces, was the pattern of his father. Both possessed that rare acquirement, the faculty of at once inspiring love and reverence. Hence the merry group could enjoy their sports no longer, and most of them began to make preparations to return. Guilford sent some gentle message to reconcile Hager, to a longer ab-

sence than he at first intended, and placed himself under the orders of the old man.

"This suspense is awful," said the Colonel, taking out his watch, observing that it wanted but a minute of four. "For one hour they have been over him, and no life yet. O! Merric, my son, my son!"

"Let us be patient, father," said his daughter. She had been sitting pale, cold and silent, lost in gloomy thoughts.

Another hour rolled on, and still another, yet no signs of returning animation. Guilford, wearied and weak, still exerted all his remaining strength in keeping up the friction necessary to support the faintest spark of life. The Colonel had three times traversed the entire circle of the belt of woods in which they had passed a day so eventful; now he presented himself at the door of the tent.

"This is sheer mummery," he said, wildly; "I will not have you do this longer; let the poor body rest. How can you torture it so?"

Guilford saw the gleam of insanity that

kindled his face; he himself had almost given up hope as the rays of the sinking sun reddened the canvas sides of the tent, and the edges grew gloomy with coming twilight.

"Let me alone," said the old man sternly. "I told you I should work over him for six hours—aye! suppose it were twelve and hope at last. Go out, Colonel," he added, more gently, "you are not fit to be here. Go out and don't come again till we send to tell you one thing or the other."

"But the way I treated him!" almost sobbed the Colonel, though his voice was husky, and his eyes dry and glassy.

"Colonel, you had better not remain here longer," said Guilford, laying his hand respectfully on his arm.

"Perhaps not, perhaps not," said Colonel Leffingwell.

"And—your absence may occasion comment at home. If you could only return for a little while, and then—"

"What! without him! go without my

boy?" broke in the Colonel, abruptly, "No, no; I stay by till he goes with me, dead or alive." Another dry sob.

"Then you will stay outside the tent. You see your presence unnerves us; we cannot do all we would for his recovery."

"Yes, I will go, I will go," the Colonel said like a child, and he passed forth into the dimming atmosphere.

Mary Leffingwell and Sarah Church sat together; both were silent. Every few moments Sarah responded to calls in the tent, taking water—whatever was required. By the time it grew quite dark, Mary was persuaded to go home, but the Colonel remained. The fire was still fed by the attendants, and its bright flame cast a brilliancy over every object near and remote. Several of the town's people were present, for an intense and heartfelt sympathy reigned in all Clifton Locks.

Little Hager had wondered more than once why Guilford did not come. At last her mother told her that some one had met with

an accident, (for she grew very restless) and Guilford was stopping to help them. Then her face brightened; she said she was very glad, for who would help as well as he? "and besides, mother," she added, "if it is serious, and any one is going to die, you know he can do just as much good as a minister!"

So the shades of night came on, and it grew intensely dark. Strangely looked that little tent glimmering in the flame-light, the bowed figures here and there, the groups standing, walking, talking, wondering what the result would be. Not far off, by a short cut, was the Colonel's family carriage, waiting to receive death or life. The horses stood, two black shadows in the darkness, betraying their presence only by an occasional stamp and whinney. The coachman sat, likewise a black shadow, erect, thoughtful, it might be fearful, for sometimes he essayed to whistle, but the whistle faded as if the darkness had shadowed it also.

At last it was nine o'clock. The bereaved

father had not spoken for hours, and there was scarcely a movement to be seen, save the black figures gliding warily within the tent, or going to and fro from there to the fire.

At last Guilford came out. He staggered almost like a drunken man as, meeting some one, he asked in a whisper, "how shall we tell him?"

"What! then there is no hope?"

"The young man is risen," said Guilford solemnly, laying his hand heavily on the shoulder of the other, as if for support.

"Do you mean to say—"

"Yes, hush! be cautious; I mean to say he is given back from the dead. Fifteen minutes ago we discovered a pulse; one minute ago he spoke to me—" wholly overcome, Guilford laid his head upon the arm that rested on the man's shoulder, and burst into tears, for the fatigue, anxiety, and constant efforts he had put forth for so many hours, had made him as weak as a child.

"There'll be a crying time all round, I

guess," said the man, huskily. It beats all I ever heard of. Look here, are you certain?"

"Of course I am," said Guilford, "but I feel stronger now; I will go to the Colonel, I will tell him as cautiously as I can."

They went slowly to the spot where the suffering man had been for the last hour seated. The fitful fire-light out in the darkness shone upon his face, making more ghastly its exceeding pallor. He did not seem to hope, or fear, hardly to care.

"Colonel," said Guilford, "you must be calm."

The old man sprang to his feet. O! what a difference there was in the handsome, erect, fastidious figure, the whole bearing of the Colonel, as he stood forth before this great trial, noble, erect, faultless,—and the drooping, stooping, aged, care-worn aspect he wore at this moment.

"You need not tell me;" he replied, after a few fruitless attempts to speak, during which the dry lips came together and apart with

that heavy, sucking sound that always distinguishes inward grief. "The carriage is here; I will take him myself."

"But, dear Colonel, you do not understand."

"Not understand, not understand!" he reiterated, eagerly. "What do you mean?"

"Your son lives."

The Colonel caught his arm, led him to the fire, gazed wildly in his face, laughed more wildly, then seemed as if turned into stone again.

"Do you mean to say you have succeeded?" he asked, with livid lips.

"I do; we have, with the help of God, restored him to life," was Guilford's reply.

The Colonel gave one glance heavenward, then fell on his knees. Slowly lifting his clasped hands with an expression that in its intensity was fearful, he cried, "God of heaven and earth, for this unmerited blessing, for this wonderful miracle, for this answer to a sinner's prayers, I devote myself to thee; I

devote my children to thee, souls and bodies, eternally. Amen! Now take me to him."

He had risen. Maud stood weeping by his side. Unable to bear the suspense at home, she had driven again to the woods; the Colonel placed his arm around her tenderly, and kissed her.

He was so quiet, so thoughtful! He only drew a long breath as he entered the tent, as if his heart were surcharged, and bent, like one bending over an infant, above his son.

"O! Merric, my boy! my boy! forgive your old father!"

There were few dry eyes there, few! there were none. A feeble response came; the words "I am so glad for you!" were faintly heard. Outside the men were forming a litter. They were so overjoyed, they were so excited, that they ran hither and thither without method, almost knocking each other down. Presently out in the moonlight they brought him, well wrapped up, but helpless as an infant, and every heart there put up a prayer for him; some of them sobbed outright.

"Guilford Coit, and you, Mr. Church, must ride in the carriage with my boy and me. Mary, darling, take Sarah in your carriage; be sisters to each other; God bless you both! I am nearly crazed with happiness."

And so the day closed; closed with prayer and thanksgiving, closed with tears of joy, for it was known thoughout Clifton Locks that the Colonel's son was saved. The men marched in a body almost to Rose Hedge, and there they played upon the viol and flute, upon whatever instruments they could muster, and the harmony, though none of the best, softened by the distance, sounded sweet as angel music.. Later, a carriage dashed up to the door. It was the young doctor, all in a tremor, just from the death-bed of his sister, with whom he had been through the day, ten miles off. Guilford rode back with him to the door of the tavern, stole one look at little Hager, who just then was happily sleeping, and hurried to his bed a wearied but a happy man.

CHAPTER XX.

THE COLONEL'S RESOLVE PUT INTO PRACTICE.

THE morning sun stole into the plain little chamber occupied by the two young men—Guilford and Austin. Guilford had slept soundly long past his usual hour of rising; he awoke with a start, heard the rushing of water, and suddenly that fearful scene of yesterday swept across his vision. How pleasant the sun seemed, now he thought that Merric was not dead, now that he saw, as if in a vision, the whole train of circumstances that were likely to result from this direct and striking providence. Again the rushing sound of water. Guilford turned his head; a keen pain smote his heart as he saw Austin, plunging both hands into the deep basin and throwing the water over his face, his throat, his bosom. Poor Austin!

"What time is it?"

The young man wheeled round like lightning, showing red eyes, a clouded face, disordered hair from which the water dripped.

"Ha! you awake Guilford? I feel like a miserable dog this morning. You and I have both overslept ourselves."

"It doesn't matter much; after yesterday, I think we ought to be excused to-day. The woods party didn't agree with you, then."

"The champagne, you mean. I tell you what, old fellow, the next time they ask me to take champagne, and *I take it*, they'll know it, I guess."

"I knew it would hurt you," said Guilford.

"It made me a fool—a miserable fool. They all saw it, they all knew it; I shall be ashamed to show my face among them."

"What I was afraid of," said Guilford, "was the influence of your example upon that old man. I would not have drank before him, not if wealth and even reputation had been at stake. He did nobly, however; his skill and

his science saved poor Merric; I don't know what the Colonel will do to show his gratitude."

"Guilford Coit, I honor you," said Austin, in his impulsive way; "I'd give a thousand dollars if I had your resolute will."

"Would you? You can get it for nothing," said Guilford, earnestly.

"O! yes, I know what you mean, but I don't believe it; the principle must be planted in the heart by nature."

"By grace," reiterated Guilford.

"Pshaw!" and Austin turned away. "I tell you it is in your nature to deny yourself a thing that you think will injure you. By nature, you can control yourself in every respect better than I can, who am a creature of impulse."

"So was I once," said Guilford.

"Never!" you might as well tell me the moon was a cheese and expect me to believe it, as expect me to believe that. The fact is, you never knew yourself, Guilford, if you tell

me that you are not naturally a self-reliant and resolute man."

"All I am I owe to the grace of God," said Guilford, resolutely.

"Guilford, you're enough to drive a saint mad," said Austin. "You are under a delusion."

"O, my friend!" exclaimed Guilford, and along his voice ran a passionate entreaty, "how applicable are the Saviour's words to your case, 'and ye *will not* come to me that ye may have life.' You say I am under a delusion, happy delusion, then, that makes me a child of God and an heir of heaven. Blessed delusion! that enables me to put aside the sin that easily besets me, and glory in denial; holy delusion! that gives me longings for purity, inside cleanliness, a nearness with my Saviour, delight in prayer. O, Austin! how can you persist in staying away from God?" There were tears in his very voice.

Guilford, after his morning devotions, hurried to Hager's room. She had been in great

pain, the nurse said, but was so patient! The fair young girl looked saintly as she lay there, white, too weak even to reach her hand out to the friend she loved so well, but still smiling, still willing to suffer her appointed lot, still looking up, in much faith, hoping and trusting. It could not be called a sad sight, though it was enough to affect one to tears. Neither was it very sorrowful to know that the fabric in the hands of the nurse was destined to wrap the lovely limbs when they were clay-cold. Guilford looked upon her as half angel already. So sweet a resignation to the will of God he had never seen before.

"It almost makes me cry to think how kind everybody is," said Hager, large tears shining round in her eyes. "Yesterday, Mrs. Leffingwell sent me such beautiful bouquets, oh, such beauties! look at them. She sent me jellies, too; everybody is so kind!"

"Everybody loves you, Hager; do you feel in low spirits this morning, darling?" asked Guilford, seeing a change pass over her face.

"If it wasn't so hard for poor father," she quivered.

"We must pray to God that he may be willing, my child; that he will give him consolation in the thought that he will see you again."

"If it might only, *might only* be!" she said with unusual emphasis, for her. "O, how I pity father! I was his poor little all," she added, with such pathos, the tears running down her face. Don't you see how changed he is? Don't you see how thin he grows? What can I do to make him happier? I can't bear to feel that he is so unreconciled. Only think! nurse told me this morning about Mr. Merric; poor father! it will only make him worse; ain't you afraid it will?"

"He ought to be very thankful for every blessed providence," said Guilford.

"Yes, so he ought; but—poor father! poor father!" her words died away in a moan.

"Do coax her to take a little of this arrow-root," said the nurse, handing a small saucer.

"By and by, Mr. Coit, when I get over this," said Hager, chokingly; he had never seen her so moved before.

"Now, Hager, now; it will do you good, my darling."

She looked at him, her eyes implored, but he was firm. She tasted the food, it strengthened her.

"Talk to me about Jesus," she whispered. "I shall be better by and by. The doctor came very late; he said it was almost certain I should live over Sunday; I know I shall."

So Guilford sat and talked till the hour for work. She took his hand in her little white, wasted fingers as she said, "how kind and patient you are, Mr. Coit!"

He could hardly answer except with a smile and a loving pressure of the hand.

Going out he met the landlord, who stood, bent and despairing, near the door of Hager's room.

"Where's the justice of God, Mr. Coit?" the latter cried, with a trembling voice, "that

my one lamb should be taken and his left, not his only one, either. Is Colonel Leffingwell any better than I am?"

Guilford recoiled a little. The question had taken him by surprise.

"I say, where's justice, the justice!" whispered the man, more hoarsely.

"God only can answer," replied Guilford, solemnly.

"But he wont;" retorted the tavern keeper. "O! Mr. Coit, I wish you had never come here, indeed I do; somehow it seems to be all wrapped up with you. You've drawn her heart from her poor father, oh!" and he broke down into a wild grief that would hear no word and hurried from the hall.

It was very sad to Guilford, who was doing all that mortal man might do for the comfort of the child, for the good of all, and who would willingly have borne the sharp thralls of the bruised body to help that poor, pale sufferer, but he comforted himself with the thought that God knew all about it. That was enough for him.

The next hour was a brighter one, for at the door, sitting erect as ever on his noble gray, was Colonel Leffingwell.

"Good morning," he said, in a subdued voice, and as he dismounted he wrung Guilford's hand, the ecstacy of gratitude made his eyes shine.

"Lead my horse to the stable," he said to the hostler. "Mr. Coit, I wish you would walk a short distance with me; never mind the office; you shan't go to the office to-day, sir, no sir, not to-day.

"Mr. Coit," he continued, drawing the young man's arm through his, "our Merric is himself again, only a little weak, as is to be expected, but bright as ever. Now, I've been somewhat hard on you, because your religious views didn't quite suit me, but I'm an altered man, and I feel as if you had a right to my endless gratitude. You want reforms here, Mr. Coit, I've seen it for some time, and I'm not going to stand in your way. I shall shut the bar up, to-morrow—" Guilford gave a

glad start—" and after this I'm heart and hand with you in all your good works. I may even come to be a Christian, myself," he added, hesitating a little.

"God grant it, sir," replied Guilford, with animation.

They had walked rapidly, and were fast nearing the little cottage where Sarah and her father lived.

"I have have an errand here," said the Colonel, "how prettily they have arranged things about the place! Come in for a moment, Mr. Coit."

The sun shone redly on the painted floor, through the little white curtains of spotted muslin. Sarah was just preparing breakfast; her father was drawing something on paper, attached to a small frame. They were both glad to receive their visitors, and apologized for the lateness of their rising.

"Don't say a word," said the Colonel, looking at the fine white head of the old man, with tears in his eyes.

"Young Mr. Leffingwell is getting along, of course," said Mr. Church, laying aside his implements.

"Thanks to you, my friend; yes," returned the Colonel, with much emotion. "Miss Sarah" he added, "I can't make a long story of it. You asked me once if I could sell this house to you and take the pay in instalments. My dear child, there are the deeds; they are made out in your father's name, present them to him with my compliments; the house is yours with the land about it."

Sarah stood looking at the folded papers in her hand; the old man rose from his seat, gazing at them as vaguely as she; Guilford, mute with astonishment, glad from his heart, smiled at them all; Sarah was the first to break the silence.

"Did I understand—" she began timidly.

"I must go now, Miss Sarah. Mr. Church, good morning, sir," said the Colonel, abruptly; "come Coit, there's lots of business on hand," and away went the Colonel purposely

to avoid a scene, for he felt his own eyes moist.

"Father, the house is ours," murmured Sarah, in a bewildered way; "the house ours, and we not to pay a cent. O! father, father! we are rich! so rich!"

"Let me see the papers, daughter," said the old man, his hand trembling, his manner fluttered. Yes, the fact was apparent, he was once more a land owner, he had nobly earned the endowment, but he did not think of that, only to be grateful.

"Now," he said, and it seemed as if a youthful vigor had been infused into his frame, "now I can walk erect again; now I can take my place among men; now I can give my time to my invention, and my dear girl, the darling and comfort of my life shall not toil and delve in the factory, in the midst of that cruel machinery."

"Sarah," he said a few moments after, as the young girl moved about like one in a dream, "after all we owe it, under God, to

that noble young fellow, our mill agent. I am positive that no other person could have the same influence over me, and where would old drunken Church have been to-day, but for him? Who would have called on the trembling old dram-drinker to restore a drowned man to consciousness? God bless him."

Sarah said the words, "God bless him!" after him, very softly, but why did her lip quiver? Ah! her life's nobler lesson she had yet to learn—to sacrifice even her heart's love if heaven required.

CHAPTER XXI.

A NEW ORDER OF THINGS.

THE hush of a new-born Sabbath broods in the air. The fields steeped in sunshine look their gladness, the trees stand rich fruited and the grain bends with its weight of blessings.

Clifton Locks never saw such a revelation as the coming hours will bring. The news has gone far and wide, there is to be service, real preaching in the great hall of the old tavern. Everything is arranged, and Christians who have heard the news for miles around, will flock to the place. There is no longer a bar in the Saint tavern. The child Hager has prevailed, and the evil spirits are thrown out, never to be reinstated. The tavern-keeper has become more quiet in his grief, through the ministrations of little Hager.

It may be he sees, dimly, God's hand in the cloud.

There will be a great gathering at the tavern. The gay beauties and the reckless revellers of Clifton Locks, as they array themselves for the appointed time, move with quieter mien, and put aside their brighter colors. At every breakfast table the matter is discussed. It is wondered if the Colonel will be there! how the Colonel will feel about it; if the Colonel will give any more great parties? if the dance will be turned into a prayer-meeting? etc., etc.

Meanwhile Hager seems stronger to-day than at any other time during her illness. Her whole being is irradiated with a beautiful light, her folded hands are whiter than the robes she wears, there is peace written upon the calm, glad brow. Her mother has all things in readiness, the snowy handkerchief, the bright little shawl to throw over her white dress, the slippers she wore at the last dance. Beside them is an offering from Mary Leffing-

well, of fair, bright flowers. She gave them to Austin Grande that morning, saying, "they are for our Hager." He, as he received them, stood a moment silent.

"After all," he whispered, "Guilford Coit is a man!" he meant much by that little word.

"I wish there were more like him."

"I wish to heaven there were," he cried, almost with passion, "though" he added, turning aside, "he gains all hearts, and poor sinners like me must go begging for love. I ought to hate him."

"Austin." He glanced up—in that minute, quicker than the lightning's flash, a revelation was given to him. I shall not say what it was, but Austin Grande, the one great fear of his heart removed, walked back to the tavern on air. He was on the *threshold* of Doubting Castle now, looking outward and upward.

Meantime Guilford sat in the room with Hager, whose beaming eyes, softened through

absence of pain, deep with the light of love and trust often wandered to him.

Tristam Saint was there, watching every sweet look of his child. He was still bitter towards Guilford, for in the depth of his anguish, he felt that he had taken his place in the heart of the innocent girl.

"Father!" said Hager, he came towards her.

"Do you think if I got well it would make you a Christian?"

"I could not help it," half sobbed the man. "I don't want you to die, little Hager." Hulda sighed and thought of the time he had said, so impiously, "I wont give her up, even to God."

"But father, I might not stay with you if I got well." It was innocently spoken, but like a flash came a conviction over the old man's heart, as his eyes met those of the mill agent. The latter started from his seat, looking out of the window. "The people are coming," he said; "now be brave and calm, Hager."

Yes, in throngs along the beautiful roads of Clifton Locks. The old and the young, the virtuous and the vicious were there; the theme on every tongue the approaching services. It was something they had never thought of in their worldly supineness and frivolity; preaching in that place. Dancing, gaming, sporting, parading, all these were familiar things, but preaching was a novelty, and to many, nothing more. The minister came early and was ushered into Hager's room. He and Hager were father and child in a moment. He was startled by the extreme etherialization of the saint-like creature. His voice choked as he saw her lying there in her mother's arms so white and patient, the long, fair curls that Sarah had been twining round her fingers pushed back from the temples.

"Can you bear it?" he asked, "you look very weak."

"But my heart is strong," was the sweet reply. "Christ will fold me in his arms, just as mother does now."

"Here is a sermon," thought the good man, "better than I shall preach."

In a large cushioned chair, near the extemporized pulpit, Hager was carefully seated. The silence was broken by a low murmur, as this last, greatest blessing filled her blue eyes with tears of gratitude. Who could wonder that even strong young men broke down, and here and there could be heard an audible sob? To see her sitting there in her feebleness, the light of a celestial atmosphere folding about her, was it not enough to draw tears, even from the most hardened eyes?

Will it be thought strange if here I write down the words of that sweet song, by Christians sung wherever the word of light is known? For this was what they sang that blessed morning.

"Go preach my gospel," saith the Lord,
Bid the whole earth my grace receive;
Explain to them my sacred word,
Bid them believe, obey and live.

"I'll make my great commission known;
And ye shall prove my gospel true,
By all the works that I have done,
And all the wonders ye shall do.

"*Go, heal the sick, go raise the dead,*
Go cast out devils in my name:
Nor let my prophets be afraid
Tho' Greeks reproach and Jews blaspheme.

"While thus ye follow my commands
I'm with you till the world shall end;
All power is trusted to my hands,
I can destroy and can defend."

Those who were looking towards Hager—and they were not few, observed a singular light play over her features, as the third verse was given out, line by line. A smile, a lifting of the eyes, a suffusion that for one moment made the cheeks crimson, then a gentle sinking back as if the emotion had exhausted her.

Then followed a dead silence. There was communing with hearts, there was struggling with conscience. Many made the honest resolve to do better for the future. Tim Collins, the only support of his widowed mother, who had been apparently going to destruction, began from that holy day the work of reformation. Nelly Hanfort, of whom ruin was predicted, and, poor girl, she stood nearer to the

brink than any one there even dreamed, saw suddenly, the pit yawning beneath her feet, and started back in time. One step more, and I shudder to think of the thing she would have been. Thank God! that effort saved her. A little group gathered about Hager, who had waited till the minister came down. He bent to her pale lips, lifted himself and looked incredulous.

"Mr. Coit," she said, holding her hand out to him, "let me tell you the good news, I am going to get well. Are you glad?"

"He gazed at her much moved; he could not speak, could not dash her hopes, and yet, could not believe.

"Do you remember," she asked softly, "what that line in the hymn was,

'Go—heal the sick, go raise the dead,'

I lifted my heart in prayer, and I said, O, Lord God! if thou hast anything for me to do, and if it will help my dear father to believe, heal me. At that moment, a strange strength came to me, I cannot describe it, it

was something so new, and I felt then that God would let me live to comfort my dear mother and my dear father."

Here Tristam broke down with a loud cry, and fell sobbing on his knees at her side.

"O, my lamb!" said her mother, her face beaming with holy joy, "am I so blessed as to keep you a little longer?"

But why attempt to express the delight and awe that thrilled the assembly? Rather give glory to God, that he condescends sometimes to display his power as in the olden time when he caused the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the deaf to hear his blessed gospel. The wonderful news spread rapidly. Hager was still weak, still passive in the hands of her friends, but the surprise of the doctor when he met her was very evident. Her pulse he said had not been so strong for weeks, and he listened as incredulously as others had to the simple story of her faith."

There must be power in this religion if what she says is not the phantasy of disease,"

he whispered aside to Austin Grande, who also wondered with the rest. "Hager is evidently a new being. I find the dangerous symptoms are gone."

"It is wonderful," replied the other.

"Grande, there's something in all this I can't understand, can you?"

"I confess my inability," replied Austin Grande.

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," said a deep voice near them.

It was Guilford Coit.

Both the doctor and Austin were silent. Austin was evidently ill at ease and struggling with pride.

"Come both of you into the service of the Master," said Guilford after a solemn pause.

"Guilford, I am convinced," exclaimed Austin, his stubbornness melting, "if there is any hope for such a wretched doubter as I am, pray for me."

"Pray for yourself, my dear fellow," said Guilford, tenderly. "He never casts out those who come to him in brokenness of spirit; he is waiting to bless you now, pray for yourself."

"God helping me, I will," said Austin, humbly, for now that he had made some little advance towards a better life, his nature grew less adamantine, he felt as if there were gentle influences surrounding him.

CHAPTER XXII.

GOOD TIDINGS.

READER, my labor of love is ended. This story as may have occurred to you, is no fiction, but the relation of events, which, many of them, took place in a New England village, and are still told with tears and thanksgiving. Let me here give a letter from Merric Leffingwell, while he was at college, and preparing to graduate with deserved honor.

"My Friend Guilford, —

You know, of course, that I am almost through, and ready for Clifton Locks. Dear Clifton Locks! How I long to see its hills and valleys once more! Your news of the great revival at the mills, rejoiced my heart more than tongue can tell; may the good work spread!

I was thinking the other night, over old times, and little Hager, blessed little Hager! What means doth the Lord work! Who would have thought that the little, quiet creature, so retiring as almost to be unnoticed, would have been honored with so distinguished a part in this great reformation? And how almost miraculous her restoration! I have often thought of the similarity between our condition—I,

rescued from a watery grave, and brought to life when apparently dead—she taken from the very borders of the tomb and led up to new health and a new experience, through the mercy of God.

Above all things was I glad to hear that Tristam Saint had given his heart to the Lord Jesus. He has had a long and a hard discipline, but he will make all the firmer Christian.

So old father Goldby has gone home? the dear old man! Who knows how much the great work may be owing to his silent influence. Mary writes me that old Mr. Church is likely to make a fortune with his patent. I am very glad. Nor was I surprised to hear the news about you and Hager. I wish you joy of so sweet a bride. She was my boyish ideal of beauty, but she never knew it, and that is all past. I shall like Austin Grande for a brother-in-law, famously. May your union and his be prosperous and happy.

Think of the change! Thank God for it! Clifton Locks regenerated! It seems as if the very mill stones must give thanks to God. I thank you for the beautiful sketch of the town. Your church edifice is everything that could be desired. Adieu, my friend, my brother. In all my prayers be sure I shall ask an especial blessing on you and Clifton Locks."

A PLEASANT ENDING.

Three years have passed. For that time, till within two months, the wife of Colonel Leffingwell has been in heaven. Now there walks by his side one in whom we have all felt an interest, Sarah Church no longer, but

Sarah Leffingwell. The Colonel is a happy man, and has lost nothing of that heartiness of manner, that pleasant, gentlemanly courtesy that so becomes the believer. He works much more than he talks, and puts his religion into everything. Hence he is a fearless, upright man, scorning hypocrisy, a terror to half-way Christians. It was with Hager as she had so strangely prophesied. Gradually her injuries were all healed, and after months of protracted weakness, she gladdened the hearts of those about her, by moving around the room, pale and shadow-like, yet like one raised from the dead; a monument of God's gracious mercy. It was not long before she went to the house of God in company with her parents, and with emotions too great for utterance, entered the simple edifice, erected since her illness for the worship of our Almighty Father. O! to look about her and see the happy faces, beaming with sacred light and to know that many of them worshipped the Jesus she loved; that some were there who once loitered about the

bar room, profane and Christless, now restored to the likeness of God, and singing His praises!

Guilford loved her at first as one might love an angel, but as returning strength gave the light back again into the "sweetest eyes were ever seen," and invigorated the graceful frame, he wooed and won her for his wife, attracted more by her spiritual loveliness than her physical beauty, which seemed doubly enhanced.

And here we leave Clifton Locks, a mighty power in the Christian world. The place that boasted that once it knew no church and no Christ, has now more than five spires pointing heavenward, five assemblies of worshipping Christians who walk humbly before the Lord. The little Sabbath School, for whose success Hager wept and prayed, has multiplied exceedingly, and her own sweet children, together with a little Maud Mary Grande, hear from her lips the story of her love for the Sunday School, and hallow it with their childish affection.

TO GOD BE ALL THE GLORY.

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